

New Pacific Sports Complex will cost city an additional \$100,000 per year to maintain

By Amy Sylvestri

San Leandro Times

It will cost the city and school district about \$100,000 more annually to run the Pacific Sports Complex and Burrell Field when the new, revamped facility opens later this year.

The Pacific Sports Complex and Burrell Field is set to open in August, but before it does, the city and school district have to decide how they want to use the facilities – and how they are going to pay to maintain them.

At a work session Monday night, the City Council spoke with the city's recreation department

and the school district to figure out a plan for the use of the complex.

In addition to the football field and track (Burrell Field), the Pacific Sports Complex has tennis courts, soccer fields, and baseball and softball diamond, which have always been open to the public.

The sports fields will be used for school sports, but when no school teams are playing, the athletic complex could be open for the public or other sports leagues, as it has been for decades.

The longer the open hours and the more fields that are open, the more costs in maintenance and utilities. There is a price estimated by the city's public works department for everything from graffiti clean up, to replacing light bulbs, to the cost of scraping gum off the track.

If all the fields were open to the public 7 days a week, the city estimates it would cost over \$270,000 to operate annually. If it were completely closed to the public except for paid/reserved activities, the city estimates it would cost around \$65,000 to run.

Superintendent Cindy Cathey and school board trustee Diana Prola told the city they wanted to work as partners and said they preferred a “hybrid option” for the Pacific Sports Complex’s hours, with some of the facilities open to the public every day, but the football field closed to the public, as it was before the remodel.

If they go forward with the hybrid option, the annual cost of operation will be \$183,929, up from around \$90,000 annually, according to Carolyn Knudtson, the city’s recreation director.

“I’ll ask the most important question,” said Councilman Jim Prola at Monday’s meeting. “Where are we getting this money?”

City Councilwoman Diana Souza said that she would choose an option to keep the fields closed because she doesn’t think the city should contribute financially.

“This is for them (the school district) to resolve internally,” said Souza. “We have had to cut many services. Let the school district figure out how they are going to fund it.”

Souza added that about 30 percent of the city – those in the San Lorenzo school district – couldn't even vote to approve the sports bond, so it wouldn't be right for the city to use their money on the project.

Councilman Prola agreed that the city doesn't have the money to contribute to the maintenance of the sports complex. He suggested that they find a way to make money off the field, such as signs and sponsorships or charging non-residents more to rent the complex.

Because the meeting was a work session, no vote was taken by the council. But an informal poll of the council showed that – besides Souza – they are in favor of the hybrid option of keeping the football field closed, but having the other facilities open to the public.

“I would like it open,” said Councilwoman Ursula Reed. “I would like to work with the school district to do whatever we can to support you, but we just can't support you very much financially right now.”

The next step will be for the school board to discuss their financial options and then for the City Council and school board to have a joint meeting in March.

Maintenance Costs to Rise on New Burrell Field

Thursday, 17 January 2013 15:44
