



DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND  
RECREATION

Jim Combs  
Director

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August 19, 2009

Mr. Keith Sharward  
Board Member and Co-Founder  
Witter Ranch Community Alliance  
3270 Arena Blvd., Suite 400, PMB211  
Sacramento, CA 95834-3001

Dear Mr. Sharward:

This letter is in response to your April 27, 2009, letter expressing the concerns of the Witter Ranch Community Alliance about Witter Ranch Park, more particularly the field lights. Parks can be a tremendous asset to the community, but I recognize that they can sometimes bring challenges to the immediate neighborhood.

Department staff has reviewed your letter and offers the following background in response. This information is intended to provide the foundation for a meeting between the Alliance members and Department of Parks and Recreation staff.

A review of citizen calls for law enforcement service at Witter Ranch Park from June 1, 2008, through May 31, 2009, reveals that there were 17 calls for service to our Police Department or Park Safety Rangers, some (not all) of which are similar to the types of issues you indicated in your letter, including illegal food vendors, persons in the park after hours, graffiti, juveniles in the park making noise, or soccer/football players making noise. We would not consider the amount of calls for service nor the nature of the calls abnormal, but I do understand the feeling among residents that even one call for service is one too many.

The North Natomas Community Plan, adopted May 3, 1994, identified community parks as 6 to 60 acres in size and serving residents and workers within a three mile radius. Community parks are further identified as those parks that should be able to accommodate larger recreational activities and a greater variety of uses than a neighborhood park. It is debatable whether the vast majority of people using the field lights come from beyond the three mile radius.

When first created, the North Natomas Community Plan contained more detailed language and requirements for parks than any other community plan in the City. Note that the acreage requirement for community parks is 6 to 60 acres in size, while the City's Parks and Recreation Master Plan guideline identifies 10 to 60 acres in size. Therefore, a 9 acre community park was consistent with the North Natomas Community Plan at the time it was developed. With the adoption of the City's General Plan 2030 earlier this year, a new North Natomas Community Plan was also adopted which superseded the original Community Plan. It does not contain the same level of detail regarding parks that the original community plan contained. Information from the 1994 North Natomas Community Plan is provided to give you perspective on the Plan that was in place at the time the park was dedicated and developed.



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When the Witter Ranch Park site was deeded to the City on February 24, 1999, the 9 acres was intended to be developed as a community park. This intent was memorialized with the adoption of the City's Parks and Recreation Master Plan by City Council in December 2004. In that document, the Witter Ranch Park is identified as a community park.

On July 23, 2002, City Council adopted Resolution Number 2002-493, including adoption of an Addendum to an Adopted Negative Declaration, adoption of the Park Master Plan, naming the park "Witter Ranch Park", and awarding a contract for Phase I construction. The staff report to the City Council that accompanied the resolution identified the Phase I improvements as including the following:

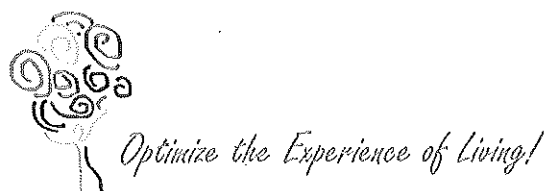
- Drainage system
- Automatic irrigation system
- Landscaping, turf & trees
- Concrete pathways
- Site furniture
- Drinking fountain
- Regulation-sized soccer field w/ lighting
- Bantam-sized soccer field
- Baseball diamond
- Two lawn volleyball courts
- A children's playground
- Group picnic area

Witter Ranch Park was dedicated and developed as a community park, consistent with the North Natomas Community Plan, City's General Plan and Parks and Recreation Master Plan that were in effect at the time the park was developed. A second phase was completed for Witter Ranch Park that included a tot lot, a large shade structure and restrooms. Restrooms are generally not placed in Neighborhood Parks.

The Witter Ranch Park Master Plan, including the lighted fields, was reviewed by the Natomas Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee and the Citizen's Advisory Committee for Parks and Recreation in 2001 and adopted by City Council in 2002. In addition, the lighted fields are specifically mentioned as improvements in Phase I of the construction that was approved at the same time as the park's master plan adoption. Also, Community parks as identified in the North Natomas Community Plan and the City's Parks and Recreation Master Plan 2005-2010, may include lighted fields.

Regretfully, an oversight was made in the 2008 Department of Parks and Recreation Master Plan 2005-2010 Technical Update which erroneously indicates Witter Ranch Park is a neighborhood park. The Department will correct this error via separate City Council action if need be, or it will be addressed in the next update of the Master Plan, anticipated for 2010. For this error we apologize.

Also, as a point of clarification your letter asserts that there are only six parks with less than 10 acres in size that either have sports field lights or have sports field lights planned in the future. Actually, there are an additional six park locations with less than 10 acres currently operating with sports field lights. In addition, there are 7 other parks with less than 10 acres that have lighted tennis courts.

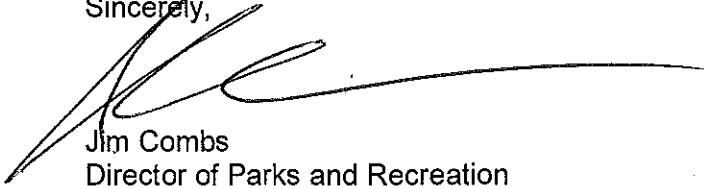


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Witter Ranch Community Alliance

Having provided the background on the field lighting and enforcement services, I would like to offer to meet with you and other members of the Alliance to try to reach mutually agreeable solutions that might help mitigate your concerns. Please contact Cynthia Ramsey, my Administrative Assistant, at 808-8379 with dates and times that work for you and other Alliance members if you would like to meet to discuss this issue further.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Jim Combs  
Director of Parks and Recreation

cc: Councilmember Ray Tretheway  
Captain Daniel Hahn  
Dave Mitchell  
J.P. Tindell



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