

LIVERMORE AREA RECREATION AND PARK DISTRICT

FACILITIES COMMITTEE

MINUTES

**Wednesday, July 9, 2025
3:00 p.m.**

**Robert Livermore Community Center
4444 East Avenue, Livermore, CA 94550-5053
West Wing Conference Room**

Committee Members Present: Chair David Furst, Director Maryalice Faltings

Staff Present: Fred Haldeman, Parks & Facilities Manager (PFM)
Jill Kirk, Community Services Manager (CSM)
Daniel Mason, Facilities & Parks Maintenance Supervisor (FPMS)
Joseph Benjamin, Recreation Supervisor (RS)
Brenda Rios, Child Development Supervisor (CDS)
Linda VanBuskirk, Executive Assistant (EA)
Kendahl Hettick, Financial Analyst (FA)

Members of the Public Present: Patricia Moore

- 1. Call to Order:** Committee Chair Fust called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.
- 2. Public Comment:** Chair Furst opened the public comment period.

Patricia Moore, a Livermore resident for 25 years, expressed concerns about cattle grazing in Sycamore Grove Park. (Her letter to the Facilities Committee is attached to the minutes.)

There were no further speakers, and the public comment period was closed.

- 3. Approval of the Minutes of the Facilities Committee Meeting held on June 11, 2025:**
 - **Action:** The minutes of the Facilities Committee meeting held on June 11, 2025 were approved as submitted.
- 4. Camp Shelly Update**

Recreation Supervisor (RS) Joseph Benjamin provided the Committee with an update on Camp Shelly, which officially opened for the season on June 13. The first *Destination Shelly* overnight camp is running successfully and the second is scheduled for July 14-17. The new “no groups” policy was well-received, and overall operations are running smoothly despite occasional bear sightings. However, the campground is without potable water due to contamination in its aging pressure tank. While the restrooms with toilets remain operational, showers, sinks, and campsite spigots are shut off. Repairs would require permits and time, pushing completion beyond this season, so staff will operate “bare bones” for the summer. Plans are in place to flush and sterilize the tank at the end of the season and again before next year, with consideration of a UV treatment system to help prevent future issues.

All reservation holders have been contacted and informed of the water limitations, offered a 50% fee reduction, or a refund. Guests are advised to bring their own water, and signage has been posted with spigots capped. Campfires are prohibited, though propane stoves are allowed. The cancellation rate is currently 21%, occupancy is at 64% (just 10% below last year), and rates remain competitive with other “bare bones” campgrounds in the Tahoe Basin. Resident reservations make up 52% of total bookings.

Looking ahead replacing the tank is estimated at \$20K-\$25K plus design, permitting, and installation costs, with the potential need to address the water lines serving most campsites. A smaller bypass tank was considered but not feasible mid-season due to health department requirements.

- Staff will compile a detailed cost and income evaluation for Committee review, and Staff will explore whether the U.S. Forest Service has any responsibility for the tank.

Despite limitations, staff have been creative in maintaining the Camp Shelly experience, offering ping pong tournaments, sand volleyball, stargazing with telescopes, hikes, and other activities in place of traditional campfire programming. Two park aides are stationed on-site, with a full-time ranger rotating in through July before transitioning back to aides only.

Public Comment: Patricia Moore asked if a new pump is needed along with the new tank. [*PFM Haldeman explained that the well pump is in good condition, with the tank and water lines being the sole issues.*]

- **Action:** This was a discussion only; no Committee action was taken.

5. Planning for Future Trails and Trail Connectors (Standing Item)

PFM Haldeman provided an update on the trail repair near the Concannon Bridge, which sustained damage during the 2023 floods. Staff met on-site with City engineers to discuss rerouting the trail. The preferred option would direct the trail to the Concannon/South Livermore intersection, cross via the crosswalk, enter the Ernie Rodriguez facility parking lot, then loop around the ball fields to reconnect to the trail. This route would require grading and a retaining wall to accommodate elevation changes. While other alternatives were considered, this plan appears most feasible within budget constraints, with final design decisions expected in the coming weeks. The project will be funded, designed, and built by the City.

The committee also discussed the trail near the Plotkin property and Lake A. Staff and city engineers are exploring using the existing Zone 7 maintenance road to avoid costly elevation changes in the original plan. While this approach has broad support, Zone 7 has expressed reluctance to allow public access on property they will manage. The matter remains under negotiation between Cemex, Zone 7, and the City, with the City taking the lead.

The committee reviewed work on updating the District’s trail map. The current version is overly dense and contains inaccuracies. Planned revisions include simplifying the layout, improving accuracy, possibly dividing the map into quadrants for better readability, and incorporating helpful reference points like schools, parks, and key facilities.

- The goal is to produce a clearer, more user-friendly trails map by October.

Public Comment: Patricia Moore is a resident familiar with the area and expressed support for the trail alignment toward Sycamore Grove Park. Additionally, she thanked LARPD for the Patterson Ranch Trail, saying it is a lovely walk.

- **Action:** This was informational only; no Committee action was taken. However, staff will provide a progress update next month, as there has been public interest in the [T11, Shadow Cliffs to Del Valle Regional Trail.]

6. CIP Update/List of all CIP Projects (Standing Item)

PFM Haldeman provided an update on current Capital Improvement Projects as of July 9, 2025. The list of CIP projects was included in the agenda packet.

a. Tex Spruiell Park potential dog park and/or community garden:

Chair Furst advised that a citizen requested the District consider adding a dog park and/or community garden at Tex Spruiell Park. PFM Haldeman provided background on existing dog park capacity, noting that in the 2016 Master Plan, the District had four off-leash dog parks, and as of 2025 there are seven. Based on national rankings and acreage recommendations, Livermore far exceeds average per capita access to dog parks—ranking potentially first or second in the nation with approximately eight acres of off-leash space for a population of about 90,000.

Discussion emphasized the importance of establishing clear criteria for evaluating future dog park locations. These would include factors such as minimum park size, geographic spacing to avoid overcrowding, and consistent amenities across sites. Tex Spruiell Park is roughly one mile from Bruno Canziani Dog Park and two miles from Robertson Park, making its proximity a limiting factor. Staff noted that most existing dog parks are under an acre, with Robertson Park being an exception at 4.5 acres.

Regarding Tex Spruiell specifically, the park is approximately seven acres, but its layout—featuring a central turf area surrounded by planters—limits available space for new facilities. While a small dog park could technically be placed in a corner, its size and proximity to other parks make it less viable. The community garden suggestion also appears unfeasible due to limited suitable space.

- **Action:** This was informational only: no Committee action was taken. However, the Committee agreed that having an organized, criteria-based framework would allow Staff to respond consistently to public requests. Staff will work with the General Manager to develop these criteria and bring the draft to the Facilities Committee for review before it moves forward.

7. Playground Replacement Projects (Standing Item)

PFM Haldeman reported that

- a) The playground replacement project at Mocho Park was completed in July, 2025.
- b) The playground replacement project at Tex Spruiell is anticipated to be completed in August, 2025.
- c) The next two playground replacement projects will be at El Padro Park and Lester J. Knott Park.

- **Action:** This was informational only: no Committee action was taken.

8. Future Agenda Items / Matters Initiated / Announcements

- a) Director Faltings proposed exploring the use of the Ravenswood winery ruins as an outdoor wedding venue. She suggested stabilizing the walls, cleaning the interior, and adding either lawn or flooring to create a functional space, thereby reducing wear and tear on the historic main house (built in 1891). She noted that Ravenswood may be the only historic home in the Bay Area allowing weddings inside, and other venues typically use outdoor spaces or

separate facilities. She emphasized the site's accessibility from the parking lot and her long-standing interest in the concept.

- Chair Furst recommended that the idea be brought to the General Manager for consideration, with staff evaluating feasibility, costs, permitting requirements, and any prior city concerns.

9. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

/Lvb

July 9, 2025

Sycamore Grove Cattle Grazing Project

Good Afternoon Director Furst and Director Faltings, and Staff,

Thank you for your years of service on the LARPD Board.

My name is Patricia Moore, I've lived in Livermore for 25 years and have been a contractor with the District for most of those years, teaching here in the Rec. Center. I appreciate the many programs that have been developed for the Livermore community.

I live near Sycamore Grove and it is my 'go to' park for hiking several times per week. I am concerned about the introduction of the cattle onto the newer upper part of the park. At first it seemed like a good idea when there was plentiful green grass to be eaten. I assumed that the cattle herd would be seasonally removed or culled as everything dried up in the summer.

But no. After a two+ week hiatus for personal vacation and business, I was appalled to return to the upland park last week and see that the cattle, concentrated in the scenic Wagon Wheel loop, were devastating the landscape. I felt like an intruder on an overgrazed 'cattle ranch' during my 80 minute hike, which I've done hundreds of times.

I can appreciate the District's goals for fire protection, habitat conservation and invasive plant management. And the new signs paint a very rosy picture of the project. However, I believe that the reality of what is taking place, perhaps **overgrazing**, needs to be assessed by experienced biologists, naturalists, rangeland professionals.

There are new cattle trails everywhere, including along the gravel roads. The trees have been eaten up to cattle head-height. They are eating every last green morsel at this point, including young oaks and the coyote bushes south of the pond. All vegetation is gone from around the formerly pleasant resting benches. There is cow poop everywhere.

The lovely pond with turtles is now filthy muddy, with few turtles. Cattail pond was part of a \$425,000 riparian restoration project funded by the Coastal

Conservancy in 2007. It seems that the whole restoration area along the Wagon Wheel loop is now being devastated.

I went on this hike on a windy morning last week and dust was blowing across the field from an area devoid of vegetation, where 50+ cattle were concentrated under a few oak trees. What kind of mud hole will this be in the rainy season?

Further along I had to go 'off trail' to avoid several cows coming my way on the fire road, since I was by myself and had a bad experience with cattle at Del Valle some years ago.

Right now, I am asking Board Members to take a walk or a ride with a Ranger up and around the new 'cattle ranch' to see what is happening. I have taken many pictures, and regret that I do not have BEFORE and AFTER shots to compare. This part of the park is no longer user-friendly to your constituents in my opinion.

Was an environmental impact study done before this plan was implemented?

What exactly is your Rangeland Management Plan?

Do you have a Rangeland Management Professional who is overseeing this project? Someone like Clayton Koopmann who manages 40,000 acres of nearby land in Alameda Creek Watershed for the San Francisco PUC.

I would like to know the amount of acreage that is allotted to each cow in the park's grazing area. Will the land will be occupied by cattle year round? Will the number of cattle be reduced or culled during the dry season? Will ranchers be travelling the ever-widening roads to bring supplemental hay or feed for the cattle to eat during our long dry summer?

Please put this matter on the agenda for further investigation and discussion.

Thank You, Patricia Moore

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References:

Clayton Koopmann

Koopmann Rangeland Consulting

<https://koopmannfamilybeef.com/pages/about>

California State Coastal Conservancy

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<https://scc.ca.gov/>

See Project Number 06-042-01

<https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/0e5226ae75424ee995ffa6ada9bdf5ac/>