

TOWN OF WINDSOR AGENDA REPORT

Joint Windsor Town Council, Windsor Redevelopment Successor Agency and Windsor Water District Meeting Date: April 17, 2024

To: Mayor and Councilmembers
From: Olivia Lemen, Parks and Recreation Director
Subject: Pleasant Oak Park Renaming

Recommendation to Council:

Adopt a resolution approving the name change of Pleasant Oak Park to David Smith Memorial Park.

Strategic Plan Element:

The recommended action supports the goal of Livability. Goal Statement: Preserve community character by maximizing the use of existing amenities and creating future opportunities that enhance quality of life for all.

Background:

The 2030 Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update (PRMP) was adopted by Town Council on June 7, 2017. During this update process, extensive community outreach took place including stakeholder interviews, focus groups, phone and online surveys, and public workshops. The findings of this research were utilized to develop the Goals, Policies and Recommendations for the PRMP. The following identifies a high priority to advance the Town of Windsor Parks and Recreation Department and enhance the Windsor park system:

Goal 7: *Encourage and support participation of all segments of Windsor's population.*

Recommendation 7.1-5: Develop environments and programs for a range of groups with physical abilities and mental cognitive abilities, which are fully inclusive. Combine active and passive activities. Encourage community members with physical limitations and special needs to participate.

Pleasant Oak Park is a large neighborhood park, located along Old Redwood Highway. The park is adjacent to Mattie Washburn Elementary School which serves preschool through second grade-aged children. The park contains a protected drainage area which includes a suspected wetland feature and is separated by split rail fences from the lawns and play area. The park also contains walking paths and two small playgrounds. The active play areas are not continuous, limiting their use for active sports. There is also the Chuck Williams dog park on the eastern side of the park which is a popular amenity.

While the park is eight and a half acres in total, only four and a half acres are owned by the Town. The remaining four acres are accessed through a long-term lease agreement with the Windsor Unified School District as outlined in the site map (Attachment 2).

The Town has initiated the design process for a full park renovation which will update the playgrounds and create the first all-inclusive playground in Windsor. This will bring a new regional benefit to the County and provide a service to an underrepresented and underserved population in our community. This project will not impact the dog park other than making recommendations for enhancement opportunities.

As the Town is looking to revise the entire Pleasant Oak Park space, the name of the park and historical significance within our community is being considered. Currently, the Town has ten community and neighborhood parks and facilities which are named after significant people within the regional area:

- **Esposti Community Park** – Named after Nick Esposti, former Sonoma County Board of Supervisor and an advocate of youth and sports programs. As a County Supervisor, Mr. Esposti was a strong supporter of the incorporation of the Town in 1992.
- **Hiram E. Lewis Community Park** – Named after Hiram Lewis, the first postmaster in this area. In 1855, he named the community “Windsor,” presumably because the area’s pastoral beauty reminded him of the grounds surrounding Windsor Castle in his native England. He loved the area’s beautiful oak trees and park-like appearance.
- **Pat Elsbree Skate Park** – Charles (Pat) Elsbree was a long-time resident of Windsor and well-known contributor to the Town and its agricultural development. Mr. Elsbree previously owned the land that the Skate Park is built on.
- **Keiser Community Park** – Named after Louis B. Keiser, an immigrant from Switzerland who came to Windsor in the 1920s. In his later years, he took it upon himself to plant trees and flowers in a local park and arose early every morning to pick up litter and sweep the streets of Windsor.
- **Michael A. Hall Park** – Named in memory of Chief Warrant Officer Michael A. Hall who lost his life in the Gulf War.
- **Wilson Ranch Community Park** – Named after the Wilson family who owned the land on which the park was located.
- **RT Mitchell Park** – Named after Robert T. Mitchell who settled in the area in the 1800s, owning 320 acres from Windsor Road to the railroad tracks and Shiloh Road north. He also donated part of his land to create the Shiloh Cemetery.
- **Robbins Park** – Named for a pioneer Windsor family that once owned the land the park is on.
- **Sutton Park** – Named for another local family within Windsor whose land was subdivided and donated to create the park.
- **Huerta Gymnasium** – Named in honor of Rudolfo (Rudy) Huerta who was tragically killed in a car accident right before he was set to become a teacher at Windsor Junior High School (now the Civic Center site). Mr. Huerta was an inspirational leader who personified dedication to his students and the community. He was a great community influencer who positively promoted better Mexican-American relations among the students.

In keeping with this methodology of considering individuals who have proven to be influential to the fabric of our community, our history and our land, the Town looked to our Native American community to identify a significant leader for the renaming of Pleasant Oak Park. The Town partnered with the Progressive Tribal Alliance to help make this milestone in the Town and County history a reality.

Discussion:

The Progressive Tribal Alliance (PTA) is a local non-profit established in 2022, with a mission to increase representation of Native Americans in business, entrepreneurial ventures, and to foster a stronger civic presence through education and leadership opportunities. The Town and PTA have partnered on a series of Town Council proclamations and projects; currently working together to bring a new cultural community event to the Town Green on May 11. The Native Arts Festival (<https://progressivetribalalliance.com/>) will include native dancing, storytelling workshops, authentic vendor booths, arts exhibits and food from 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

The Town of Windsor, in partnership with the Progressive Tribal Alliance, the Smith Family and with tribal blessings, would like to formally recommend changing the name of Pleasant Oak Park to the David Smith Memorial Park. This action will honor the legacy of a local Pomo Community Leader and represents the first time in the 32-year history of the Town of Windsor that a Native American community leader is acknowledged in an influential way.

David Smith

David Smith was born November 13, 1949, into the Manchester/Pt. Arena and Kashia bands of Pomo. The youngest of 18 children, he grew up on the Stewarts Point Rancheria, where he was immersed in spiritual traditions of his mother's people. David participated and practiced his traditional ways as a very young child and continued into his final days. He suffered through many illnesses starting as a young infant being diagnosed with TB. A disease that took the life of many of his siblings, he always turned to his spiritual beliefs, songs, and dances for healing and strength. At the age of seven, he became a childhood student and dancer for Essie Parrish, one of California's most renowned Native American healers during the 20th century. As a descendant of the Kashia Pomo and a member of the Manchester Band of Pomo, David was a lifelong Pomo cultural worker, having four Pomo grandparents, and a father who was a clown dancer and a 'to'to dancer for the Point Arena Pomo. David is remembered as the ka'be or rockman for the Coastal Pomo Dancers.

In 1969, David joined the occupation of Alcatraz and was among the first occupiers on the "Rock." He also organized students at Santa Rosa Junior College to join in the occupation. He was close friends with Richard Oaks, the spokesperson for the Indians of All Tribes on Alcatraz. Though Richard was tragically killed in the 1970s, David remained a friend of Richard's Kashia family up to the end of his life. After Alcatraz, David was instrumental in securing 150 acres outside of Windsor Town Limits which is now called Ya Ka Ama. Ya Ka Ama is the only permanent land base for "Indians of All Tribes."

Regionally, David is considered an invaluable and influential Native American community leader in modern times. He taught Native culture, prayers, songs, and dancing to anyone who showed an interest to learn. These students would in turn go on to teach others, and over time, through his teachings, Dave was able to reach thousands of native dancers and singers in the Mendocino, Sonoma, Marin and Napa Counties. These singers and dancers have gone on to perform in our communities at gatherings and festivals and continue to expand the legacy of David Smith. Through his lifetime, David served in his role of teacher, and was the Master of Ceremonies for the Day Under the Oaks at Santa Rosa Junior College for 16 years (2004 – 2019).

During his life, David lived throughout many regions of Sonoma County and Northern California. Like many Pomo families, migrant farm work was a way of life. Years of his adolescence were spent living in Windsor. At the age of 21, he moved back to Windsor with his wife and kids, during his time working for People for Equal Opportunity. He also lived for many years in San Francisco, later to return to his original homelands on the Manchester Rancheria, where he lived until his passing in October of 2022.

As many Pomo tribes throughout neighboring counties struggled to restore or stay together in their communities, David Smith was instrumental in the perpetuation of the Pomo culture for all. He was brought into various Pomo communities instructing all aspects of the 'to'to dance. He taught regalia making, traditional song, and everything in between. He has taught some of the finest dancers that have gone on to lead dance groups for their own tribe. These groups have become a source of healing and community for the past 30+ years. David's resolute leadership and teachings are honored by many and helped to keep native traditions alive. He led the dancers in such a way that onlookers could physically

feel their bodies begin to move to his rhythm and this was powerful, even at the end of his life when he himself was confined to a wheelchair.

"My job was to teach, to keep these songs and dances going. I think I did my job and I know I can rest." - David Smith

The proposed renovations of the park will bring a message of inclusivity and provide new opportunities for those who have previously been underserved. The renaming of the park to David Smith Memorial Park will carry the legacy of a man many thought of as their teacher, to help educate and guide our community through the cultural connection of our land, the native people and our modern community. Staff recommend including Pomo words of "our people's teacher" on the park sign (Attachment 3).

Upon approval of the Town Council, a ribbon cutting and unveiling will be scheduled for a date in May. This event will also kick-off the community outreach and feedback process for the park amenity renovation. This will be the beginning of a long, communitywide process of healing and inclusion and the park will become a cornerstone of community pride.

Fiscal Impact:

The direct cost of this action will be \$3,300 to replace the park sign. There are sufficient funds appropriated in the Council adopted FY23-24 budget to cover this project.

Environmental Review:

The project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) in accordance with section 15301 because it consists of replacement or reconstruction of existing structures and facilities. Therefore, no environmental review is required.

Attachment(s):

- 1. Resolution - Pleasant Oak Park
- 2. Site Map
- 3. David Smith Sign
- 4. PowerPoint Presentation
- 12.1 Correspondence Received (Distributed 2024-04-16)
- 12.1 Correspondence Received (Distributed 2024-04-17)

Prepared by:

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Parks and Recreation Director

Recommended by:

Jon Davis
Town Manager