

**MINUTES
CITY OF WEST HOLLYWOOD
PUBLIC FACILITIES, RECREATION, AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMISSION**

**WEDNESDAY, JULY 12, 2023
CITY HALL COMMUNITY MEETING ROOM, 1ST FLOOR
8300 SANTA MONICA BOULEVARD
WEST HOLLYWOOD, CA 90069**

6:30 P.M. – REGULAR MEETING

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

THE PUBLIC FACILITIES, RECREATION, AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMISSION ACKNOWLEDGES THAT THE LAND ON WHICH WE GATHER AND THAT IS CURRENTLY KNOWN AS THE CITY OF WEST HOLLYWOOD IS THE OCCUPIED, UNCEDED, SEIZED TERRITORY OF THE GABRIELEÑO TONGVA AND GABRIELEÑO KIZH PEOPLES. (PRONOUNCED “KEECH”)

1. CALL TO ORDER – Vice Chair Solomon called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

A. LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT – Read by Vice Chair Solomon.

B. OATH OF OFFICE

The Oath of Office was administered to Deepa Krishna by Assistant City Clerk Morales.

The Oath of Office was administered to Santo Ragno by Assistant City Clerk Morales.

C. ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Commissioner Jackson (she/her);
Commissioner Karliss (he/him);
Commissioner Krishna (she/her);
Commissioner Payton (she/her);
Commissioner Ragno (he/him); and
Vice Chair Solomon (he/him).

ABSENT: Chair Mason (he/him).

ALSO PRESENT: Helen Collins (she/her), Facilities and Field Services Division Manager; Erin Hamant (she/her), Senior Administrative Analyst; Lourdes Morales (she/her), Assistant City Clerk; Stephanie Martinez (she/her), Recreation Services Manager; and Ric. Abramson (Ric.), City Architect.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE – Led by Tod Hallman.

3. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

ACTION: Approve the July 12, 2023, Agenda.

Motion by Karliss, seconded by Payton, and approved unanimously.

Roll Call Vote:

Commissioner Jackson – Y

Commissioner Karliss – Y

Commissioner Krishna – Y

Commissioner Payton – Y

Commission Ragno – Y

Vice Chair Solomon – Y

4. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

ACTION: Approve the minutes of the prior Public Facilities, Recreation, and Infrastructure Commission meeting dated June 14, 2023.

Motion by Jackson, seconded by Karliss, and approved.

Commissioner Jackson – Y

Commissioner Karliss – Y

Commissioner Krishna – A

Commissioner Payton – Y

Commission Ragno – A

Vice Chair Solomon – Y

5. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Kali Rogers, WEST HOLLYWOOD, spoke about the popularity of pickleball and asked the Commission to support more funding to increase the number of pickleball courts in West Hollywood and to consider a partnership with the City of Los Angeles to add pickleball courts at Poinsettia Park.

Yola Dore, WEST HOLLYWOOD, spoke about disabilities awareness month and asked the Commission to consider nominating candidates for a disability service award. The deadline to submit is on August 4th.

Michael Wojtkielewicz, WEST HOLLYWOOD, spoke about the vacant and contaminated land at Crescent Heights and Santa Monica and the longtime closure of Laurel House. These publicly owned lands should be owned for community use and benefit.

Cathy Blaivas, WEST HOLLYWOOD, welcomed the new Commissioners, acknowledged staff member Helen Collins who thoughtfully offered them an assisted listening device tonight, and asked staff if the pet waste station located next to the Detroit St. Community Garden could be moved

away from the entrance and closer to the corner of the site. Also, the bamboo courtyard was removed at the affordable housing location on Sierra, which serves people with disabilities, and a pile of dirt has been sitting there ever since. The community would like to see these plants replaced, especially since plants help to combat the effects of climate change.

6. **CONSENT CALENDAR** – None.

7. **PUBLIC HEARINGS** – None.

8. **NEW BUSINESS**

A. **ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR**

SUBJECT: The Commission will nominate and elect a new Chair and Vice Chair.

Assistant City Clerk Morales read into the record information about the Commission’s Chair and Vice Chair positions.

1. Assistant City Clerk Morales opened the nominations for the position of Chair.

Motion by Karliss to nominate Solomon as Chair, seconded by Payton.

Roll Call Vote:

**Commissioner Jackson – Y
Commissioner Karliss – Y
Commissioner Krishna – Y
Commissioner Payton – Y
Commission Ragno – Y
Vice Chair Solomon – Y**

ACTION: Vice Chair Solomon is elected as Chair to the Public Facilities Commission.

2. Assistant City Clerk Morales opened the nominations for the position of Vice Chair.

Motion by Krishna to nominate Karliss as Vice Chair, seconded by Solomon.

Roll Call Vote:

**Commissioner Jackson – Y
Commissioner Karliss – Y
Commissioner Krishna – Y
Commissioner Payton – Y**

**Commission Ragno – Y
Vice Chair Solomon – Y**

ACTION: Commissioner Karliss is elected as Vice Chair to the Public Facilities Commission.

B. COMMUNITY GARDEN PROGRAM

SUBJECT: The Commission will receive an overview of the City’s Community Garden Program, accept public comment on the item, and provide feedback.

Staff provided a historical background on the City’s community garden program and stated the purpose of tonight’s item is to collect public comment about the community garden and for the Commission to provide feedback because it is scheduled to close in October. The community garden is a leased space, and the property owners are now endeavoring to develop the site which is why it is scheduled to close. Additionally, the City Council Plummer Park Ad Hoc Subcommittee will agendize a discussion on the community garden program at an upcoming meeting.

Commissioner Jackson asked if multiple locations could be identified throughout the City and if a survey has been done to solicit community input on the community garden program. Staff explained that the current problem is finding even one location to place a community garden in the city and to-date a survey has not been conducted. The city is park poor, lacking green space, with less than one-half acre per 1,000 residents while the national average is ten acres per 1,000 residents.

Commissioner Krishna asked how many people are currently on the community garden waitlist and if the City has considered using rooftop spaces. She also suggested vertical gardens could be an option for the City to consider building. Staff answered that the waitlist is approximately 35 people and explained that the rooftops on City-owned properties are unable to support the weight of gardens and the provision of water is also an issue.

Commissioner Payton asked if there were incentives for private property developers to create community garden spaces and what are possible timelines. Staff explained that new commercial development agreements are a means for creating a green space for public benefit, like both the Havenhurst and Formosa pocket parks or a community garden, but typically residential developments (non-commercial projects) are not targeted. Staff described how timelines are flexible, but the City has not been successful to-date with finding a private developer interested or City properties where a community garden could be placed.

Commissioner Ragno asked about the costs to make the Kings Road Parking

Structure's rooftop into a community garden. Staff shared that this was one of the ideas that has been considered but ultimately decided it was not a fit location. The structure would need to be retrofitted to take on the extra weight of rooftop gardens, waterproofing membranes and water access would need to be installed, and ultimately a new tenant is moving into the ground level of the parking structure so allotted parking spaces have been identified for this new business as a part of the lease agreement. Noise levels adjacent to residential housing is also a consideration.

Commissioner Ragno asked about the proposed Crescent Heights Parking Lot and if this undeveloped location could be used for a community garden. Staff explained that the site requires environmental remediation and would not be an appropriate place for a community garden. Commissioner Ragno also asked how the City was able in the past to successfully partner with developers on a ground lease agreement to create a community garden. Staff shared that the City mails letters to vacant property owners to gauge their interest as well as proposing the partnership in the new commercial development negotiations process.

Commissioner Payton asked if the City is able to rent land outside of the City for use as a community garden. Staff confirmed they have not sought to investigate land sites beyond the city limits and would need to explore the legal requirements with the City Attorney.

Vice Chair Solomon asked if there is a checkbox to gauge private developer interest to partner with the City to establish a community garden in the private development permitting or entitlement process for use while the land is sitting undeveloped. Staff are evaluating these opportunities and having conversations but there is not a specific question in the permit application. The City does not want or encourage vacant lots to sit for extended periods unused after demolition and could be a good opportunity for the City to negotiate a ground lease to establish a temporary community garden when the applicant applies for an early demolition permit. Vice Chair Solomon also asked if Plummer Park could be used for a community garden and what is the soonest possible timeline for the new Plummer Park and visioning process. Staff estimated 24 months is the soonest timeline to complete design and commence construction, and then the construction timeline cannot be estimated because that would be contingent on the new design.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Yola Dore, WEST HOLLYWOOD, spoke about food insecurity that came to light in the city during the pandemic and value to the environment, the value to combat stress, and the beauty that community gardens provide a city. She asked the Commission to consider the many possibilities for a garden in the city such as a learning garden where multi-generations learn together how to plant fruits and vegetables.

Stephanie Harker, WEST HOLLYWOOD, spoke about the importance of the City having the will to do it and to imagine new possibilities. As an example, the community has been successful working with the City to establish a new off leash dog run area at Plummer Park, and another example outside of the city is the Rainbow Garden Project in Santa Monica which has a learning garden and space for cooking classes. Community gardens are as important to the community as the housing projects and are an urgent need.

West Seegmiller, WEST HOLLYWOOD, spoke about being on the community garden waiting list and now has a plot at the Detroit St. Community Garden. They spoke about community at the garden, the importance of food self-sufficiency, mental health benefits, and asked City staff to listen to the community wisdom and to help them fulfill an apparent need in a world class city.

Edyth Magoun, WEST HOLLYWOOD, spoke about the urgent need to support bees and pollinators. Developer interests should not be paramount to resident needs. Food insecurity is a big deal for senior citizens and gardening activities are ideal for the elder population rather than sports facilities. Chicago has 70 community gardens and West Hollywood should have at least one.

Chris Piehler, WEST HOLLYWOOD, shared appreciation for the City providing the community garden they have today but to be sustainable City land should be identified. Plummer Park is an ideal location, especially the area on Fuller Avenue. It could be a place for community gatherings and the Plummer Park Preschool could bring the kids over to learn about plants. Community gardeners are also willing to donate a percentage of their crops to the West Hollywood community in support of local food security.

Christopher, WEST HOLLYWOOD, thanked the Commission for their questions about the community garden program and suggested the Commission to target parallel solutions by identifying both a long-term garden location, which will take longer to develop, and a short-term garden location for use after the Detroit St. location closes. They suggested forming a committee with community gardeners to brainstorm solutions and shared that the raised beds are simple containers and do not need to be complex or over-designed. Finally, community members do not know how to find the waiting list on the City's website.

Tod Hallman, WEST HOLLYWOOD, was a previous community gardener in West Hollywood and as much as the city needs housing, the Eastside residents are exhausted from development projects and are in favor of a community garden in the city. The City missed an opportunity to program community gardens at West Hollywood Park.

Mike Carter, WEST HOLLYWOOD, is a current community gardener and spoke about how rare it is to see someone walking around with a bag overflowing with crops from the community garden. The gardeners just need the dirt, and the pollinators do their job all on their own. They thanked the City and the Commission for hearing the gardening community's needs and hopes to see an abundant future with a sustainable community garden in the city.

Nick Sanchez, WEST HOLLYWOOD, spoke about the difficulty it is to speak about the needs of the community gardens when the focus seems to be about property owners, development, and green spaces that are not prioritized by the City. It is irksome to see bureaucracy getting in the way of climate solutions. They spoke about the bounty of their garden plot. They shared recommendations: identify someone who knows about gardening to lead this work, identify real incentives for property owners and developers to convert lawns, quantify the number of gardens needed in the city based on resident interest and work towards achieving these plots in the upcoming years, and increase the City budget for green spaces and community gardens.

Michael Wojtkielewicz, WEST HOLLYWOOD, spoke about the City of Los Angeles' 51-year legacy of utilizing public land for gardening and West Hollywood's lack of action to support climate change solutions, environment, and nature. Design obstacles and public space struggles should not inhibit the City's ability to find solutions. They pointed out that at the Detroit St. Community Garden opening, the City said it would add more plots if the need was identified but never realized even with a waitlist about 40 names long.

Sam Elbaz, WEST HOLLYWOOD, is a current community gardener and spoke about how successful her garden bounty is and willingness to share excess produce with the community. They shared their dismay that this conversation was delayed and is taking place now just before the community garden closes. The safety measures at the community garden are better than at City parks. Finally, they suggested the City to inquire about using the rooftop at the Hollywood Gateway because Target may be supportive of a community garden.

Pamela Anton, WEST HOLLYWOOD, spoke about the efforts they have seen by City staff in support of the community gardens and thanked the Commission and staff for listening to everyone's comments tonight. They live adjacent to the Detroit St. Community Garden and clarified that the community gardens are not noisy. One failure of the community garden program is lack of advertising about the program and how to join the waitlist. Community gardeners are interested in supporting local food security because fresh food is important. Finally, the gardeners made a video, and everyone is encouraged to watch it and come out to visit the community

garden.

Cathy Blaivas, WEST HOLLYWOOD, spoke about how wonderful the community's passion is tonight and if passion could build gardens the community would be inundated. They suggested the only immediately viable space to move the community garden to is the Fuller Avenue side of Plummer Park which for the most part is being used today by dogs to use the bathroom.

Steve Weinstein, WEST HOLLYWOOD, submitted in advance of the meeting their written support for a community garden in the city.

Cheryl Dent, WEST HOLLYWOOD, submitted in advance of the meeting their written support for a community garden in the city.

John Hough, WEST HOLLYWOOD, submitted in advance of the meeting their written support for a community garden in the city. They are currently a community gardener in the city and shared about how supportive and amazing the gardener community is in the city.

Laura Boccaletti, WEST HOLLYWOOD, submitted in advance of the meeting their written support for a permanent community garden in a City-owned space and suggested the Fuller Avenue side of Plummer Park location leaving the existing trees intact.

Victor Omelczenko, WEST HOLLYWOOD, submitted in advance of the meeting their written support for a community garden in the city. They suggested the City could purchase property and cited missed opportunities in years previous, to place community gardens on properties identified for affordable housing, to support the expansion of green spaces in the city by changing the municipal code and/or development standards, to continuing pursuing ground lease agreements with private property owners, and to identify a location on existing City properties to establish community gardens. Community gardens support the City's climate action goals, address food insecurity, and are beneficial to residents and the environment.

Mj Godges, WEST HOLLYWOOD, submitted in advance of the meeting their written support for a community garden in the city. They were a previous community gardener in West Hollywood.

Vice Chair Solomon thanked everyone for their public comments. He asked the Commissioners to provide their final comments on the item.

Commissioner Ragno suggested unused private parking lots and reviewed various active development projects as possible locations for a community garden.

Commissioner Jackson spoke on the importance of gardening to herself and her family. She explained that she also works in local government and described how the implementation of a new community garden does take a while to establish, and unfortunately the timeline is longer than most people would like. Commissioner Jackson spoke about rooftop gardening and concerns related to equitable access, especially related to ADA compliance and for people with disabilities. She suggested a committee should be formed to track progress on this topic and spoke on the importance of keeping the community informed of the City's progress to establish the next community garden.

Commissioner Krishna encouraged the City to conduct a citywide assessment to evaluate the community's desire and demand for garden plots. This feedback may assist the City with allocating future funds to the program. She asked the City to consider adding garden plots at West Hollywood Park if that option is viable at this time or in the future.

Commissioner Karliss advocated for a community garden ad hoc committee and that a permanent community garden location is his preferred preference. He attended the Detroit St. Community Garden location, and it is sad to see it closing already. Commissioner Karliss agreed that Plummer Park does seem to be the best location to place a permanent community garden.

Vice Chair Solomon agreed with Commissioners Jackson and Karliss that a committee or subcommittee is necessary and referenced the current City Council Plummer Park Ad Hoc Subcommittee as the best means to bring up the topic of a community garden at Plummer Park. He advocated that a community gardener should be added to this Subcommittee. He recommended the Commission should craft a recommendation based on tonight's public comments to be reported out to the City Council at an upcoming meeting. Vice Chair Solomon shared the success the Commission had previously in getting the City Council to support a temporary off-leash dog park added at Plummer Park.

Commissioner Ragno asked if the Commission would be interested to discuss at a future meeting the proposed Crescent Heights Parking Lot which is currently vacant and undeveloped to see if there are better uses of the land which they could advocate for the City Council to consider. Vice Chair Solomon stated this would have to be on a future agenda item and is not part of tonight's discussion. Staff explained that this site, due to the environmental remediation needed, is not a viable location for a community garden anytime soon.

Commissioner Karliss questioned if the titles of permanent, temporary, or interim are important for the motion. Staff explained these recommendations

are important using the example of the Plummer Park off-leash dog park which expanded from a temporary space into a more permanent space because the economical wood mulch material was changed to more expensive artificial turf which ballooned the project cost from a few hundred thousand to over one million dollars.

Commissioner Jackson questioned if a temporary or interim community garden makes sense if the City is already discussing a permanent solution in the Plummer Park Visioning Project. The timing and cost to install both does not make sense.

Staff will submit the Commission's recommendation to the City Council at a future meeting date to be determined. The Chair and Vice Chair will review the staff report prior to submission.

ACTION: The Public Facilities, Recreation, and Infrastructure Commission strongly recommends the City developing an interim community garden at Plummer Park along Fuller Ave as soon as possible.

Motion by Payton, seconded by Solomon, and approved.

Roll Call Vote:

Commissioner Jackson – N

Commissioner Karliss – Y

Commissioner Krishna – Y

Commissioner Payton – Y

Commission Ragno – Y

Vice Chair Solomon – Y

9. **UNFINISHED BUSINESS** – None.
10. **EXCLUDED CONSENT CALENDAR** – None.
11. **ITEMS FROM STAFF**

Staff will forward to the new Commissions some recent communications to catch them up to speed, topics including the City's Hazardous Mitigation Plan and the Commission's FY24 Capital Budget recommendations.

The City's Annual Congress will take place on August 23, 2023, which is a dinner for all City Commissioners to attend. More details will be shared soon by the City Clerk.

POPS + PARTS: EXPLORING THE POTENTIAL FOR NEW PUBLIC-ORIENTED SPACES IN WEST HOLLYWOOD; SYMPOSIUM DEBRIEF

Staff provided a synopsis of the POPS + PARTS Symposium which took

place from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on June 10, 2023. A recording will be shared on the City's website for public viewing once it is available.

UPDATE ON THE HOLLOWAY MOTEL PROJECT

The City was awarded a conditional grant in the amount of \$6,007,661 to support capital and operating costs to convert the Holloway Motel into an interim housing program that will be operated by Ascencia. Ascencia is the City's existing shelter operator for adults experiencing homelessness.

The project is led by the Human Services Division (formerly called the Strategic Initiatives Division) and the project design is being influenced by an interdepartmental team including the Facilities Division and UDAS as well as the service provider Ascencia. Upcoming goals are to submit for plan check at the end of the month and to bid for construction in the next 2-3 months. The design team is using an old postcard to restore the building's original colors and overall, the building's exterior will not be changed significantly. The Facilities Division will manage project construction.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Michael Wojtkielewicz, WEST HOLLYWOOD, shared that the public has the right to speak on any agenda item and expressed their concern for City projects and equitability to provide public benefit to everyone. If a person is served a notice of unlawful detainer, they will receive a list of agencies who may be able to provide assistance but when you call them only one organization on the list is legally able to assist West Hollywood residents. This lack of public assistance which also causes homelessness in the city.

12. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Stephanie Harker, WEST HOLLYWOOD, wanted to thank City staff member Samuel Estrada and crew. The Tipu tree removals and replacements (Phase 1) have been completed. Trees are so important to the community. New "No Parking" signs are needed – which indicated tree trimming but should probably say something different. They concluded by encouraging the members of public who participated tonight to continue participating at public meetings, to become the mosquito in the closed car. The City is very responsive.

Christopher, WEST HOLLYWOOD, thanked staff for tonight's POPS + PARTS presentation and emphasized the importance for both short and long-term solutions. Waiting a long time is hard. The City should consider the sun versus shade as it decides the placement of its projects. For example, the new location of the off-leash dog play area at Plummer Park would have been a great location for a community garden since it has full sun exposure.

Sam Elbaz, WEST HOLLYWOOD, shared that a faulty fire hydrant on Formosa between Fountain and Santa Monica is spurting fresh water nonstop and despite many phone calls she is unsure who can remedy this issue. Staff responded that the City of Los Angeles, Department of Water and Power, is responsible for fire hydrants in that area of the city.

13. ITEMS FROM COMMISSIONERS & SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

LOOK AHEAD CALENDAR FOR AGENDA PREP & COMMISSION ITEMS TRACKER

Commissioner Jackson encouraged the City to proceed with caution when partnering with private properties to provide open, green spaces. Once a place becomes a public benefit it needs to ensure access to all including ADA compliance.

Commissioner Krishna introduced herself and is very excited to join the Commission. She looks forward to the Plummer Park Visioning Project and encouraged staff to identify locations for community gardens on both the east and west sides of the city.

Commissioner Payton is excited to see what happens next with the community garden program.

Commissioner Ragno is excited to join the Commission. He suggested Laurel Park as a possible location for a community garden for staff to consider.

Commissioner Karliss asked staff to clarify the Playground Safety line item in the FY24 Capital Budget and the Willoughby Greenway item on the look ahead calendar. He encouraged the community to attend the City's upcoming pet vaccination clinic.

Vice Chair Solomon welcomed the new Commissioners and thanked outgoing Chair Jake Mason for his service over the past year. He requested an informational item from the Recreation Division about their programs, services, and operations. Staff clarified this report will occur in November. There is a possibility that the City's recreation fee resolution may come to the Commission prior to the November meeting, and this will be determined soon by Recreation staff based on a recent Council Directive.

Vice Chair Solomon asked staff about the status of the engineering calculations on the Plummer Park Tennis Court Windscreens. Staff will check on this and get back to the Vice Chair.

Staff noted that the City Clerk updated the order of agenda items when the

Commission's by-laws were updated. Rather than two Items from Commissioners sections on the agenda, there is now only one and it will take place at the end of the meeting.

14. **ADJOURNMENT**

The Public Facilities, Recreation, and Infrastructure Commission meeting adjourned at 9:48 p.m. to its next regular meeting on Wednesday, August 9, 2023, at 6:30 p.m. at City Hall Community Meeting Room, 1st Floor, 8300 Santa Monica Boulevard, West Hollywood, CA 90069.

DocuSigned by:



Erin Hamant, Acting Recording Secretary

DocuSigned by:



Jake Mason, Chair