

TO: Ballot Simplification Committee  
 FROM: Katherine Howard, SF Ocean Edge  
 DATE: August 1, 2014  
 SUBJECT: Response to RPD letter of July 22, 2014 regarding natural grass ballot initiative and RPD Ballot initiative

We are concerned about both the tone and content of this letter and feel that it does not accurately communicate the changes that might result with the successful passing of either the Golden Gate Park Athletic Fields Renovation Act or the Renovation of Playing Fields, Playgrounds, and Walking Trails Ordinance.

The RPD General Manager's letter goes in great detail around what might or might not be the impact or results of either initiative. There are already thousands of pages of documents in the public realm that describe the pros and cons of the proposed Beach Chalet project. However, in case the RPD letter is discussed today, we feel that we must counter the many erroneous statements in the General Manager's letter. Here are just a few of our concerns and the data to back up our positions:

RPD statements	The Facts	Data
Claims that organized team sports are the best use of our outdoor spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>While team sports are important for youth health and development, there are many other recreational activities that are also important to children.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Richard Louv's book "Last Child in the Woods" explores the importance of children learning to appreciate nature by experiencing it directly and in a nurturing manner - not as something to be exploited.</li> <li>It is very important for children to partake in other kinds of recreation within a naturalistic park setting.</li> </ul>
Claims that San Franciscan's main focus is on team sports.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RPD's own 2004 Leon Younger recreation assessment study showed much greater demand for other kinds of recreation in San Francisco. Walking and biking trails came in first!</li> <li>By keeping the western end of GGP more naturalistic, we can provide more hiking and biking trails.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highest need for recreation facilities: 76% want walking and biking trails vs. 26% for recreation fields</li> <li>Highest score for most important facilities: 55% for walking and biking trails vs. 11% for recreation fields</li> <li>Programs/ activities that people would participate in more if more were available: rinning or walking - 28%, youth soccer/rugby/field hockey - 3%</li> </ul>
Claims that 65 more fields are needed to meet current needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The need for fields detailed in the Leon Younger study was as of 2004.</li> <li>this assumes that providing fields is the most important job for RPD - no claims are made for the need for other types of recreational facilities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Many fields have been renovated already with artificial turf, already providing thousands more hours of play. According to the City Fields Website, more than 72,000 hours of play have been added. This does not include the Minnie and Lovie Ward project, which will add many more hours of play.</li> </ul>
Claims that team sports on artificial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are many concerns over health issues with</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Many parents are concerned with both the type of injuries sustained on artificial turf and</li> </ul>

<p>turf are best for kids and preferred by parents.</p>	<p>artificial turf</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Many parents prefer real grass for their children, but they are not being given a choice.</li> <li>▪ Pro soccer players prefer grass.</li> </ul>	<p>the presence of numerous known toxic chemicals in the synthetic turf material.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Currently there is an EIR appeal in the courts by the Sierra Club around these issues</li> <li>▪ The group <i>Soccer Parents and Players for Grass in Golden Gate Park</i> speaks for many players and parents who are not happy with the changes already made to many playing fields. They want the Beach Chalet fields to be renovated with real grass.</li> <li>▪ Pro players prefer real turf: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="http://www.si.com/soccer/2013/04/01/abbby-wambach-turf-womens-world-cup#ixzz35GtiUn3w">http://www.si.com/soccer/2013/04/01/abbby-wambach-turf-womens-world-cup#ixzz35GtiUn3w</a></li> <li><a href="http://bringmethenews.com/2014/07/30/tcf-bank-surface-turning-to-grass-for-weekend-soccer-matches/">http://bringmethenews.com/2014/07/30/tcf-bank-surface-turning-to-grass-for-weekend-soccer-matches/</a></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>Claims that without the artificial turf and lighting at Beach Chalet, hours of play for children cannot be increased and children will be denied the opportunity to play team sports.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ There are feasible alternatives to this project that will also increase hours of play.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ See Hybrid Alternative and Analysis of hours of play</li> </ul>
<p>Claims that fields are dangerous for kids due to gopher holes and other maintenance issues.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Gardeners have testified in public hearings that RPD has neglected maintenance of these fields for years.</li> <li>▪ Gardeners have also testified that they have been able to effectively maintain other fields and keep them gopher free.</li> <li>▪ Polo Field was renovated with real grass a few years ago.</li> <li>▪ SF RPD has had the funds to hire new middle-management staff at salaries that would pay for many more gardeners.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ These problems can be solved. Part of the plan for our Hybrid Alternative is to renovate the Beach Chalet fields with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ New sub-surface drainage;</li> <li>○ Improved soil structure;</li> <li>○ Gopher barriers/controls;</li> <li>○ State-of-the-art irrigation;</li> <li>○ New sod.</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Train a gardener in grounds keeping! Knowledge can be used for Beach Chalet and for the Polo Field</li> <li>▪ Cut middle management staff and hire more gardeners.</li> </ul>
<p>Claims that grass fields cost more than artificial turf.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Studies and experience have shown that artificial turf is not cheaper than grass in the long run.</li> <li>▪ Artificial turf is very expensive to install and</li> </ul>	<p>The warranty for artificial turf is usually about 8 to 10 years. Many fields in SF have started to wear out before that time is up.</p> <p>Many articles and studies exist on this topic:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <a href="http://turf.uark.edu/turfhelp/archives/021109">http://turf.uark.edu/turfhelp/archives/021109</a></li> </ul>

	<p>must be replaced after 8 to 10 years.</p>	<p>.html</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <a href="http://www.tribtown.com/view/story/8fecf9e5792f4f06ad383f0a4d458439/HI--Maui-Stadium-Turf-Plans">http://www.tribtown.com/view/story/8fecf9e5792f4f06ad383f0a4d458439/HI--Maui-Stadium-Turf-Plans</a></li> </ul>
<p>The threat that the City Fields Foundation will pull out its funding and not pay for improvements</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The City Fields Foundation is dedicated to helping children play team sports. Surely they would help the City with top-notch grass fields, if the City decided to go in that direction.</li> <li>▪ If not, CFF can always install artificial turf in another area, and provide hours of play there. For example, they can help to finance the West Sunset Hybrid Alternative.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Our parks should not be held hostage to the demands of private donors.</li> <li>▪ The land value at Beach Chalet is hundreds of millions of dollars. The City Fields Foundation is not donating anywhere near that amount for this project. Letting the disposition of Park property be decided by billionaire donors is giving them a bargain leveraged buyout</li> </ul>
<p>Claims that there will be no funding to renovate the Beach Chalet fields with grass</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The 2008 Parks Bond provides for renovation of playing fields, including the Beach Chalet Fields. RPD has currently set aside funding to pay for renovations at West Sunset Playing Field and at Beach Chalet fields.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ There is adequate funding for renovating the grass fields to a higher level of play than now. Other amenities can also be provided for out of bond funds.</li> </ul>
<p>Maintenance will include herbicides, extensive watering, etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Herbicides are not supposed to be used on lawns or playing fields in San Francisco under SF regulations.</li> <li>▪ The Department figures on water usage have been inflated.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Our study of irrigation and water usage shows that the proposed artificial turf will have a negative effect on the City's water supply.</li> <li>▪ This study is substantiated by the Department's own emails, which resulted from a Sunshine request.</li> </ul>
<p>Families move out of SF because of not being able to play field sports</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Studies have shown that families move out of SF because of inflated property values and the cost of owning a home.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <a href="http://www.sfgate.com/realestate/article/Families-flee-S-F-for-East-Bay-with-cheaper-homes-4796027.php">http://www.sfgate.com/realestate/article/Families-flee-S-F-for-East-Bay-with-cheaper-homes-4796027.php</a></li> <li>▪ <a href="http://www.sfbg.com/politics/2012/03/09/families-leaving-sf-its-housing-costs-stupid">http://www.sfbg.com/politics/2012/03/09/families-leaving-sf-its-housing-costs-stupid</a></li> </ul>