

CITY OF SANTA ROSA
CITY COUNCIL

TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
FROM: CALUHA BARNES, INTERIM DIRECTOR
RECREATION AND PARKS
KELLEY MAGNUSON, DEPUTY DIRECTOR,
RECREATION
SUBJECT: CONSOLIDATION OF SENIOR SERVICES AND CLOSURE OF
BENNETT VALLEY SENIOR CENTER.

AGENDA ACTION: RESOLUTION

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended by the Recreation and Parks Department that the Council, by resolution, consolidate senior services located at the Bennett Valley Senior Center to Person Senior Wing and Steele Lane Center and close Bennett Valley Senior Center.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Bennett Valley Senior Center (BVSC) has experienced a steady decline in participation over the past six years since the Person Senior Wing (PSW) at the Finley Complex opened in 2012. In order to improve operational efficiencies within the community centers, senior programs can be consolidated at the PSW and Steele Lane Recreation Center. Currently, both centers have space to accommodate the 99 seniors that participate at the BVSC, as well as the rental groups that utilize the facility in the evening and on weekends. Additionally, the recent Facility Assessment Report presented to City Council on May 22, 2018 recommended that the City “divest” from BVSC because of the costly maintenance required to make the building safe, including a new roof and accessible parking lot.

This proposed action is applicable to City Council Goal 6: Provide for community safety, valued City services and open government.

BACKGROUND

1. Built in 1924, Bennett Valley Senior Center was originally South Park Elementary School. In 1976, a non-profit group, the Santa Rosa Senior Center Association was formed and purchased the school building to operate as a Senior Recreation

Center. In 1992, the Association approached the City as a partner and an agreement was reached to keep the center open and the Association on-site. In 2002, the Association dissolved and facility maintenance and operations of the Bennett Valley Senior Center was moved completely under the purview of the City's Recreation and Parks Department and became the City's first Senior Center. In addition to senior programs, rooms were made available for the community to rent for meetings and events.

2. In 2012, the City's second Senior Center, the PSW, opened at the Finley Complex and now serves 700 regularly attending seniors. Over the past six years, the BVSC attendance has dropped significantly from several hundred seniors to 99 seniors a month. Senior focused services that were once only available at BVSC can now be offered at PSW and Steele Lane Recreation Center.
3. On May 21, 2018 staff met with approximately 60 Bennett Valley Senior Center participants to discuss possible consolidation of programs. Staff asked for concerns and feedback from seniors who regularly participate in BVSC services. In general, the feedback and concerns centered around the loss of community, distance from their current location and ease of access. Specific feedback included the following: an affection for the charm of the building itself including a sense of ownership; concerns about driving to the PSW west of Highway 101 and having to travel roads such as Mendocino Avenue and Steele Lane; the comfort and familiarity of the community of BVSC participants, staff and instructors; concern about the longer walk from the parking lot to PSW; the limited and poorly located handicap parking at PSW; and the absence of pool tables or a weight room at PSW.
4. On May 23, 2018 the Recreation and Parks Department Interim Director Jason Nutt presented the consolidation proposal to the Board of Community Services (BOCS) and the Community Advisory Board (CAB) – sharing the feedback already received, and seeking additional input. Several ideas and concerns were expressed by the Boards including some of the same concerns of the seniors. Both boards suggested that staff look into other locations for programs and reach out to other organizations for services that may be available geared toward seniors.
5. Staff spent several weeks completing research to address questions and concerns from BVSC participants, BOCS and CAB.
6. On June 20, 2018 staff met with the Activity Instructors at Bennett Valley Senior Center to share research and the proposed schedule of classes and room locations at PSW and Steele Lane Recreation Center for feedback. The instructors were quite positive about the proposal, with some having gone so far as to visit the proposed new locations. They were happy that their classes and activities can be offered at Steele Lane Rec Center, which is on the east side of Highway 101, as well as PSW, at the same times and days of the week – believing that doing so would reduce the overall disruption of the consolidation of services.

7. On July 13, 2018 staff met with Senior Center participants as a follow up to the first meeting on May 21. Eleven seniors attended the meeting. Staff reviewed discussion points from the May 21 meeting, answered follow up questions, and shared research completed about other senior programs in the community. Staff also shared the newly created/proposed schedules for Steele Lane and PSW. A few instructors commented that they were pleased with the new schedules and added that their students were also pleased. Although some of the seniors were appreciative that Steele Lane, located on the east side of Santa Rosa, would be hosting programs, they still had concerns about travelling in traffic from southeast Santa Rosa. A few bingo players asked staff to explore new, improved bingo equipment for Steele Lane and perhaps create a leisure/lounge area for seniors to enjoy socializing, similar to what they have at BVSC and PSW.
8. Currently there is available space at other community centers and two clubhouses to accommodate current and future room rentals.

ANALYSIS

1. Over the past six years and with the opening of the PSW, senior program participation at BVSC has decreased from several hundred seniors to 99 seniors. PSW currently has 700 participants and can accommodate more programs. Most of the programs offered at BVSC can be accommodated at PSW and Steele Lane on the same days of the week and at the same times of the day – minimizing the disruption of the change.
2. Responding to feedback received at the May 21 meeting that programs remain on the east side of Hwy 101, staff developed a schedule of programs at Steele Lane Recreation Center to address those concerns.
3. Additionally, staff have identified a number of program offerings within the City geared toward seniors at no cost, including senior programs offered through Santa Rosa Junior College (SRJC) on the east side of Santa Rosa that are open to the public.
4. If programs move to PSW and Steele Lane, there will be an operational savings to the general fund expenditure budget. Additionally, the annual revenue can potentially be retained by maintaining programs and rentals at other recreation facilities.
5. The popular billiards program can be moved to Steele Lane Rec Center. Staff also discovered a low-cost billiards program at a nearby Salvation Army building.
6. BVSC currently offers senior programs from 9am-2pm. Steele Lane has space for several programs from 9am-2pm. PSW offers programs from 8am-5pm and has space for more seniors and programs.
7. Currently there are 2 permanent employees at BVSC who are needed at other recreation facilities to assist with senior programs, special events and an increase in room rentals. Temporary staff will be offered shifts at PSW, Finley and Steele Lane.

FISCAL IMPACT

Approval of this action has a positive fiscal impact on the General Fund.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

This action is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) because it is not a project which has a potential for resulting in either a direct physical change in the environment or a foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment pursuant to CEQA guideline section 15378.

BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board of Community Services has reviewed this recommendation

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1 – Proposed program schedules
- Resolution

CONTACT

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