

To: Senior Commission Members

CC: Manny Hernandez, Jaime Chew, Cheri Anderson and Larry Baron

From: Gary Anderson, Tracie Murray, and Bert Vincent

Subject: Review of the Senior Program at Grant Park

Over the past six weeks, our Senior Commission subcommittee concerned with the programs for seniors at Grant Park and Hillview has been focusing on the near-term status of the program at Grant Park as it is currently being managed by the Recreation and Community Services Department and the Grant Park volunteers.

Our review has taken the form of visits by all of us to both the Monday and Wednesday activities and discussions among ourselves, with Larry Baron of the Parks and Recreation Commission, and with Manny Hernandez, Jaime Chew, and Cheri Anderson.

We have been very impressed with the quality and diversity of the programs that have been developed by Grant Park volunteers with the assistance of Cheri and her predecessor Candace Avina in the R&CS. Wednesdays attract an average of about 60 participants every week to enjoy two exercise sessions, a language class, several tables of bridge, informal conversations and a greatly appreciated meal service which started as a casual bring-your-own lunch and now includes potluck weeks as well as meal service organized by the volunteers.

The Monday programs, added very recently, are being well received and participation is increasing, with 20-30 seniors taking advantage of a discussion group, a language practice session, and informal tables of bridge, with participants bringing snacks to supplement the department coffee service.

We definitely think that the city needs to continue, and if possible expand, the Grant Park senior activities and the days that the center is open, since these are a great fit to the size of the facilities and the quiet and peaceful characteristics of the neighborhood.

In the course of that work, we've observed, suggested and encouraged a number of changes that the R&CS has made led by Cheri as the new Senior Programs Supervisor. In particular, she has been working with the volunteers at Grant Park to make sure that all of them are properly registered as City of Los Altos volunteers. In addition, she has reviewed the background and qualifications of the individuals who are teaching classes, all on a volunteer basis, and gotten them formal status as contractors to the city in the classes they are teaching or leading. With Cheri having made these changes and established strong communications with the volunteers, we think the Grant Park senior program activities are completely consistent with those that she is managing at Hillview, as requested by members of the City Council.

We believe that there are still changes that need to be made in the manner in which the Wednesday lunch meal is being managed at Grant Park. In particular we were concerned

that the way in which the meals were being provided to participants might not meet County Health Department standards because of being prepared and served using makeshift non-commercial equipment. We have learned that the P&RD staff shares those concerns. Based on experience of members of the subcommittee and some research and discussion, we think that going forward there are three options available to the Grant Park center:

- a. The R&CS can engage a catering service to deliver a cooked entrée for the participants each Wednesday, which would be supplemented by salads and deserts provided by participants on a potluck basis, and served by volunteers who have received ServSafe California training and certification. This is essentially what is being done at Hillview.
- b. Cheri Anderson and the volunteers could shift the meal program to one of pot luck, with Grant Park participants bringing salads, entrees, and deserts, which would be served under the supervision of ServSafe certified volunteers.
- c. The meal service program could be discontinued without changing other aspects of the Grant Park program, with members encouraged to bring their own lunches if they were attending several activities on Wednesdays. However we have learned that the members would be unhappy to lose the meal service, so we want to do everything possible to help the volunteers and staff to find a solution, including some combination of alternatives a and b.

R&CS staff members are now exploring the feasibility and cost of engaging a caterer to deliver meal entrees to Grant Park. Once possible arrangements are confirmed, we will review the options with the volunteers and staff to determine what they would like to do. Right now, we hope that a basic catering arrangement for at least half the meals, mixed with potluck meals to take advantage of the ethnic diversity of the neighborhood, all served by trained volunteers, can be maintained for Grant Park.

We have discussed the question of meal charges, but think that a policy similar to that used at senior centers in other cities should satisfy City Council requirements for consistency with Hillview. This policy would simply require posting a sign near a deposit jar that states: "Donation requested but not required – \$4.00 from members, \$6 from non-members. An additional donation, if possible, is appreciated to help seniors with more limited means." A volunteer could manage a cashbox nearby to provide change for those who don't have the necessary small bills. We think this policy might also work at Hillview, and Grant Park will provide the opportunity to test it.

We have also noted that seniors at Grant Park would like a more permanent arrangement for open time on Mondays, since other conflicting activities prevent them from using their lounge facilities in the back of the multipurpose room on that day. Right now they may be assigned to Classroom 1 or Classroom 3, using standard tables and bringing card tables as well as coffee service across from the multipurpose room. Manny has indicated he will look into that situation and see if any improvements can be made.