
Re: Rotary Sebastopol Rotary Club plans for Ives Park

From Kirsten Tripplett [REDACTED]

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To Jane Riley <jriley@cityofsebastopol.gov>; Victoria Henkel <vhenkel@cityofsebastopol.gov>

Dear Sebastopol Planning Commissioners,

As a long-time Sebastopol community member and resident living adjacent to Ives Park, I want to state my strong disapproval of the proposed Sebastopol Rotary Club's plan to "modernize" Ives Park. I believe the current plan will change its complexion and inherent small-park nature and we will destroy some of the outstanding qualities which make it a superb city park.. The Club seems to have created a problem that doesn't exist and the park does not need the sweeping changes in the current plan. I walk in the park with my dog at least twice a day for about 30 minutes each time, and use it frequently for picnics and visiting with friends. I know the park intimately and see firsthand how people use it and what needs fixing and what could be improved. I see the incredible and dedicated City workers trying to take care of the park and its ageing fixtures with little funding and not enough staff. I feel qualified to critique the Rotary Club's plan and to ask the Commission to reject it as it stands currently.

Firstly, there is already an existing plan to restore the natural ecology of the park and I have supported that plan for years. Secondly, the Rotary's proposed plan seems to emphasize construction that is more suitable for a large city rather than a small, family-oriented park. The focus on updating the "food court" next to the baseball field seems overstated and unnecessary - it is too large and requires removal of outstanding tree specimens which provide shelter and shade to humans and wildlife, paving over vital seep-through soil and fails to contribute to the overall personality of the park. Additionally, there are numerous other baseball fields in town: why does this one need particular improvement? Why not update other food stands- at the Community Center, for instance? There isn't a true need for imposing such significant change at Ives; as there is NO real problem with their baseball field area. The park is more than the baseball field and ugly food court.

The drawings of a modernized entrance to the park are also over-the-top and again, not in keeping with a small city park. They look as if they aspire to be modern and "hip." Why on earth do we need a fancy, modern and sleek entryway? It looks like something we'd see in San Francisco or New York City, not West County. Why not something built of laminated wood and stone materials? Why put an entrance where they've sited it? Additionally, that entrance is one of the most dangerous to get to, as it requires park users to cross an increasingly dangerous and congested intersection.

The Rotary has put some significant and important infrastructure in our beloved Ives Park in the past: Why not replace and upgrade those structures instead of trying to change the character of the park? The two picnic table areas under the redwoods are growing dilapidated: fix or replace those in need, repaint them and update *that* way. Update the grills and make them more practical and safe, for goodness's sake. Many of them are poorly designed and constructed, especially the table grills on the Willow St/Jewell Ave convergence entryway. How about building a handsome wooden gazebo over the rotting and paint-chipped patio and tables area adjacent to the Peacetown concert stage? Why

not help to underwrite the restoration or purchase some appropriate native tree species for the park instead?

Interrupting the planned restoration of Calder Creek will turn out to be short-sighted, as one of the appeals of the park are the numerous shady shelters made by the mature trees which grow there (many of which have been removed suddenly and without public notice). The unique combination of Calder Creek, redwoods, weeping willows, cork oaks, and liquidambars, are the real heart of the park and provide ecological services and benefits that are priceless and already present. The creekway provides flooding control and existing trees support juncos, kingfishers, phoebes, bluebirds, crows and specifically, the large palm next to the ballfield houses warblers and hooded orioles in summer. Many baby birds fledge in the park, and I've seen night herons from the Laguna come at night to hunt gophers. Additionally, the proposed restorations will help assure that we are planning for flooding and more frequent and more severe winter storms. My understanding of the Rotary Club's plan is that it will remove a significant section of the creek that assists in safer hydrology and filtering of stormwater and flooding, especially on downstream impacts on downtown Sebastopol. This is a poorly thought out plan: To create a structure that increases the risk of unstable banks and erosion, to pave over the park further, and to remove useful and beneficial trees is shortsighted and again, and creates more problems than it solves.

Finally, this is a small park. It has a genuinely neighborhood feel, even when it has huge numbers of people, as it did this summer, when a reputed 2,000 people attended a Peacetown concert. Many families and children come to the park to play, have picnics, walk to school and walk their dogs, to swim and meander through the area. Making the park chic and shiny, creating and enlarging an unnecessary food court and paving over the special places in Ives Park, will inevitably change its lovely personality. We don't *need* changes that reflect more urban and urbane ways of living! If anything, the existing structures there need to be updated and cared for. If the Sebastopol Rotary Club wants to make a *real* contribution to our community and to Ives Park, invest in projects and infrastructural improvements so that help the park continues to be an inviting, safe place, with sound structures. I propose that they help to propose funding for care of what's there already. *That* would a real and significant contribution to our wonderful community and to our fabulous Ives Park.

With respect and thanks,

Kirsten Tripplett, Ph.D.

