

August 22, 2010

Phil Ginsburg
General Manager
San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department
501 Stanyan Street
San Francisco, CA 94117

RE: Sharp Park

Dear General Manager:

The San Francisco Green Party urges the City and County of San Francisco to close the Sharp Park Golf Course located in Pacifica, and create a new public park at Sharp Park in partnership with the National Park Service.

San Francisco taxpayers are paying millions of dollars for Sharp Park golf course, yet most residents have never even heard of it, let alone visit.

- Relatively few people use the golf course, and those who do are primarily not San Francisco residents
- Costs to keep money-losing Sharp Park Golf Course are in the millions of dollars

The millions of dollars squandered on Sharp Park will be better used to upgrade San Francisco's other 5 public courses, add to other recreational and social programs in San Francisco, where San Francisco residents – who pay for the Sharp Park Golf Course – will benefit.

Sharp Park costs San Francisco taxpayers millions of dollars, including:

- Annual operating losses of between \$30,000 and \$300,000
- Open-ended costs of potentially millions of dollars for existing and potential future violations of the Endangered Species and Clean Water acts
- Thousands of professional staff hours – representing hundreds of thousands of dollars in salary and benefits – for planning, and for attempting to comply – ineffectively – with environmental law
- Ad hoc repairs and maintenance of the pump house, berm, and other facilities; last year the pump broke costing a few hundred thousand dollars
- Capital improvements:
 - \$9.9 million for recycled water as the City is now paying for drinking water to irrigate the course
 - \$32 million for a requested sea wall, which if implemented will result in loss of Sharp Park Beach: an incalculable environmental loss for bird species and other wildlife, as well as for human recreation and enjoyment
 - \$12 million for 'revitalizing' Sharp Park Golf Course – an estimate provided by San Francisco Rec. & Park in a recent report.
- Open-ended costs of potentially millions of dollars for flooding damage of housing will occur as a result of accelerating sea level rise and coastal erosion.

These costs will only increase:

- Sea level rise will increase at a more rapid rate in the near future
- Endangered species issues: Sharp Park Golf Course has a long history of environmental problems, largely because of its poor design and unfortunate placement. The current operation of the golf course harms the habitat and causes take of two species protected by the federal Endangered Species Act: the California red-legged frog and the San Francisco garter snake. San Francisco is not permitted by the federal or state government to cause this harm.
- Clean Water Act violations

These are just some of the legal and financial problems currently facing Sharp Park.

In addition, there is less and less demand for golf by the public:

- The number one demand of San Francisco residents is for hiking and biking trails; golf is 16th out of 19 activities in the same 2004 study.
- The demand for golf is declining country wide, and in the Bay Area as well, where golf is oversupplied: 6 million rounds went unsold in 2009.

This is an unprecedented difficult economic time we are living in: it is unconscionable to ask the people of San Francisco to bail out this expensive property for relative handful of people, who do not even live in San Francisco.

San Francisco can realize an immediate budget windfall of over \$50 million in money not spent trying to prop up Sharp Park golf course by transferring the property to the National Park System.

- This transfer would remove most of the legal liabilities and open ended fiscal liabilities Sharp Park currently demands of the taxpayers of San Francisco.
- In addition, transfer to the National Park system would be a wonderful recreational and educational bonus for future generations everywhere, not just the Bay Area.

This is a good deal for San Francisco and a good deal for future generations.

Again, we request that the City close Sharp Park Golf Course, and instead, create a new public park at Sharp Park in partnership with the National Park Service. Thank you for this opportunity to express our concerns and to give our support for a new public park at Sharp Park.

Sincerely,



Eric Brooks, Sustainability Chair
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