



NEWPORT BEACH

City Council Staff Report

October 13, 2020
Agenda Item No. 16

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Laura Detweiler, Recreation and Senior Services Director - 949-644-3151, ldetweiler@newportbeachca.gov

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TITLE: City Council Support for Opening of Park Playgrounds

ABSTRACT:

Playgrounds in Newport Beach and across the state of California have been closed due to the pandemic by order of state and county health officials to slow the spread of COVID-19. Council Member Muldoon requested staff bring an item forward advocating for their opening. On September 28, 2020 the California Department of Public Health issued safety guidelines for the immediate opening of all playgrounds. In accordance with the safety guidelines, all City park playgrounds are open.

RECOMMENDATION:

- a) Determine this action is not a project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 15378(b)(5) of the CEQA Guidelines, California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Chapter 3, which provides "organizational or administrative activities of governments that will not result in direct or indirect physical changes in the environment" are not considered a project under CEQA, and pursuant to Section 15060(c)(3), actions that are not projects are not subject to CEQA; and
- b) Receive and file.

FUNDING REQUIREMENTS:

There is no fiscal impact related to this item.

DISCUSSION:

On March 19, 2020 the State Public Health Officer and Director of the California Department of Public Health issued a stay at home order to minimize the spread of COVID-19. These orders mandated the closure of some park amenities and recreational activities as a preventative measure where social distancing, mixing of cohorts and shared touch points were of concern. Many of these amenities and programs had been given clearance to resume except for playgrounds that remained closed across the state of California.

Parks throughout Newport Beach have remained open throughout the pandemic and have provided much needed relief from the stressors and challenges facing our community. The Recreation and Senior Services Department has been successful in providing ongoing recreational programming and park amenities with safety guidelines in place throughout the parks system, which has been well received by the community. Testimony from residents regarding the need for open space and recreational opportunities has been constant along with their strong desire to open our park playgrounds.

During the state ordered closure of playgrounds, staff conducted this year's playground refurbishment program and completed three renovations at Mariners, Bob Henry and Newport Shores Parks. These projects are now complete, and the playgrounds are open for use, which has minimized further downtime.

Signage has been installed at all Newport Beach playgrounds recommending proper handwashing, social distancing and avoidance of overcrowding to minimize health risks.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:

Staff finds this action is not a project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Section 15378(b)(5) of the CEQA Guidelines, California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Chapter 3, provides "organizational or administrative activities of governments that will not result in direct or indirect physical changes in the environment" are not considered a project under CEQA. Pursuant to Section 15060(c)(3), actions that are not projects are not subject to CEQA.

The action to receive and file the State's safety guidelines regarding the immediate reopening of parks is an administrative activity and does not commit the City to the adoption of any project, plan, or policy that results in a potential or actual change to the environment, directly or indirectly.

NOTICING:

The agenda item has been noticed according to the Brown Act (72 hours in advance of the meeting at which the City Council considers the item).

ATTACHMENT:

Attachment A – California Department of Public Health Opening of Playgrounds