

From: CHRISE de Tournay Birkhahn [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, August 1, 2022 11:48 AM
To: Catherine Quffa <Catherine.Quffa@cityofsanrafael.org>
Subject: Fwd: Sun Valley Park Gazebo

Catherine,

I just reviewed the agenda packet for tomorrow's meeting.

I sent the letter below last year. The notes in the new packet do NOT accurately reflect what the gazebo-adjacent neighbors feel.

I also sent another email to Susan subsequently, which I will forward too, as well as one sent to our community representative. I am not sure why these are not in the packet. And I did request to know what the complaints were and was given no response.

I just want the record to reflect that I have consistently been in support of - as well as improving - the gazebo staying in place. I frankly do not understand the characterization put forth in the records on pages 18 and 19.

To state it again, the gazebo is in sound shape. The park could use another covered spot, away from the playground, for other activities. It needs more care. The incidences are few over the last 26 years. It will be an eyesore to remove it and leave it open for what activity?

I will be at the meeting briefly and hope that the perfunctory items will be taken care of quickly. The reason I am taking the time to write the letters to the City is because I cannot be at the on-site meetings, and even an evening zoom meeting (when I am on business travel) is not the only way to get input.

Thank you,
Chrise

Chrise de Tournay Birkhahn

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]
----- Original Message -----

From: CHRISE de Tournay Birkhahn [REDACTED]
To: "Susan.AndradeWax@cityofsanrafael.org" <Susan.AndradeWax@cityofsanrafael.org>
Date: 08/23/2021 6:42 AM
Subject: Sun Valley Park Gazebo

Hi Susan,

Jim Rubin, who has been very kind in keeping us informed of the topics of discussion/action for Sun Valley Park, suggested that I send you some feedback on proposed changes.

We live on the far side of the park near the gazebo, for 25 years now. Our property is on the other side of the chain link fence, running up the hill. We have been overlooking the gazebo and its activities for these two and a half decades.

I understand there have been neighbor complaints about the gazebo, and I would just like to say that after 1/4 of a century, we are still advocates for retaining the gazebo. Many a post-season soccer party or birthday party has been hosted there, and we've had little trouble with the gazebo users. In spite of being irritated by loud teenagers at times, we too have had teenagers, and know how it has been a good place for them to hang out together with friends out of the house, etc.

I hear some neighbors have had broken windows or the like. I have not heard of much action in the gazebo, and we live above it and hear just about everything. In fact, I think the gazebo provided some safe and away outdoor space for kids to hang out during the long year and a half of the pandemic. Aside from pot smoking over the years, even that is better due to legalization of marijuana. I fear that some isolated events and the ire of property owners of sky-high real estate, feeling that they should have more control over public spaces, is guiding this decision.

I will note that some of the "newer" neighbors near the gazebo are actually louder and have more outdoor social events in their yard *next* to the gazebo - it is all a matter of perspective. With that said, vandalism is never ok. I do hope there are numerous and accurate reports that traffic in the gazebo is truly a danger, more than an irritation.

It is a perfectly good structure, we believe. Is it unsound or needs repairs? I am not clear why it needs to be removed. It has largely been forgotten, had broken and long unrepaired benches over the years. Perhaps it needs better signage and heightened awareness of public use rules - a little more TLC? No bbq of course. Fire safety is terribly important, but we know that - it has ALWAYS been the case, and we keep our yard down and the city keeps the grass/weeds cut. So if this is driven by the drought, I think the danger has always been present and this may be short-sighted to retaining public spaces.

We all need to live together, and need to offer public spaces. Regardless of the newer picnic structure built below, the extra congregation space in the park is good to have. The lower structure is usually full of small children/families. The gazebo offers more options to more people. Let's just use it wisely and better!

Thank you,
Chrise de Tournay Birkhahn



Chrise de Tournay Birkhahn

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From: CHRISE de Tournay Birkhahn ■■■■
Sent: Monday, August 1, 2022 11:50 AM
To: Catherine Quffa <Catherine.Quffa@cityofsanrafael.org>
Subject: Fwd: Re: Incident at Sun Valley Park

This was sent to our community representative.
Just want you to know that I tried very hard to have this point of view reflected, and I see nowhere that indicates that it has.

Thank you,
Chrise de Tournay Birkhahn

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----- Original Message -----

From: CHRISE de Tournay Birkhahn ■■■■
To: Sun Valley Neighbors ■■■■
Date: 07/05/2022 5:21 PM
Subject: Re: Incident at Sun Valley Park

Thank you for this thorough coverage of the recent events. Very much appreciate how on top of it everyone has been.

I wanted to say that we live right on top of the gazebo, 26 years now. We have found very little activity there in general over the last 8-10 years, save for some teenagers getting together out of the house, occasional beer pong parties during the summer of Covid-19, and very infrequent nighttime sleepers that are gone early in the morning. I personally have not seen anyone sleeping in the gazebo in about five years. And frankly, since full marijuana legalization was passed in the state, the pot smoking is almost completely gone. We were far more worried about fire issues from that activity, which the law seemed to douse.

As I have voiced to the parks & rec department, our household is not in favor of removing the gazebo. The topic hasn't been mentioned in awhile, but I feel it does provide a quieter, shadier alternative gathering space that is not in the heart of toddlers, children, families, and dogs, which seem to be the most frequent users of the lower, newer facility. Which is lovely!

The structure seems to be quite sound, and I think it could use a bit of sprucing up, and could use a little physical attention, vs what I understand has been some very negative attention. We've spent years watching all kinds of events happen there, end of season

sports parties (some were ours), and feel can actually be a lovely addition to a park with more TLC and positive marketing.

Appreciate getting to voice our experience and view on this topic for our lovely gem of a park in this special valley.

Best,
Chrise

Chrise de Tournay Birkhahn

On 06/20/2022 2:34 PM Sun Valley Neighbors [REDACTED] wrote:

Thank you to everyone who joined us at Sun Valley Park on Saturday morning. Thanks also to the City (the Mayor, Lieutenant Berringer from the Police Department and Catherine Quffa and the Library and Parks Team) for coming out on a Saturday to discuss the park upgrade as well as safety at the park and in the neighborhood. I will summarize here what we discussed for those who weren't able to make the meeting.

I will mostly cover the safety discussion as that has been on a lot of people's minds over the last few weeks and is an emotional discussion given that it involved our neighborhood children. But first, we did review the different options for the children's playground upgrade. It's great that we have the funding available for new play structure and surface upgrades. We have a few different choices for equipment and color. You can vote for your preferences here: www.surveymonkey.com/r/sunvalleypark.

We discussed the incident in the park a week and a half ago and also general park safety. One thing I've been asked about a lot was police response time; which was actually 3-4 minutes after the incident between the suspect and the children. The Lieutenant explained to us about how the police prioritize the calls that they receive and also that it is not illegal for a homeless person to be in the park. They initially received a call about a homeless person. Twenty minutes later they received a call about the incident between that person and the children and were at the park within 3-4 minutes. Hopefully that clears up some confusion on why it was thought that the response time was longer.

The Lieutenant asked that if there is ever anything you are concerned about, call the police department immediately (415.485.3000). If the situation is dangerous, call 911. Some residents expressed that when calling the general police line, the person they spoke with was not particularly sympathetic to their concern. Lieutenant Berringer said he would bring this point up with the head of the team that manages phones.

Regarding the suspect, he is still in custody. There was a hearing last week and there will be another one tomorrow. The district attorney is recommending that the suspect be required to carry a GPS, be restricted from going to Sun Valley Park and be drug tested. (FYI, a point the Mayor told us about was that with the new decriminalization laws it's harder to prosecute and detain people.)

We also had a more general safety discussion about the park. I was happy to hear how our park is being supported by our local residents. We have one neighbor who for years has been going to the park in the morning and cleans up litter. He said he's seen two homeless people in Sun Valley Park; the suspect and a second, more benign person that he generally ushers out of the park in the mornings. We also have five or six neighbors that patrol the back of the park keeping their eye on the gazebo area. Again, if anyone notices anything unusual, please call the police.

On Sat, Jun 11, 2022 at 8:21 PM Sun Valley Neighbors [REDACTED] wrote:

I wanted to give you an update. Chief Spiller let us know that he's communicating with the District Attorney and the Probation Department about this issue. As of last night the suspect was still in custody. The message from Chief Spiller is below.

I worked to communicate with the DA who acknowledged the issue and assured me to make sure there is a solid review of the incident for prosecution.

DA Frugoli made certain her staff will review the matter with all responsible diligence. We also directly connected with Marin County Probation Department to make sure they are connected with the case.

As of 6:30 pm when I left the office, the suspect arrested was still in custody with Marin County Sheriff's Office.

I attended the Nightshift patrol briefing and PD staff is aware of the background to provide directed patrol of the area.

On Fri, Jun 10, 2022 at 8:26 PM Sun Valley Neighbors [REDACTED] wrote:

I'm sorry to have to report a serious incident at Sun Valley Park yesterday. The children are ok but three children were accosted by a stranger. The suspect left the scene and was arrested at Andy's Market. He is known to the San Rafael Police and was on probation. It was also reported that he had been living in the park bathroom for a few days. The police department is taking this incident very seriously. I will send updates as we find out.

Please contact the police immediately if you ever see anything suspicious. (Also please email me so we can get the word out on any incidents.)

The San Rafael Police Chief Spiller is keeping track of this incident. Here was part of the communication he made today:

Yesterday's quick reporting helped to get this guy off the streets. Our message to you and the entire community is don't ever hesitate to call! If you ever want to report a crime or relay information regarding safety concern in the San Rafael community, please don't hesitate to call us at 415-485-3000. Emergencies, or in-progress events should be reported via 911. If you think that a crime may be occurring, or that the safety of you or your neighbors may be at risk, don't hesitate to call 911.

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Sun Valley Neighborhood Association

President-Jim Rubin
Vice President-Kathryn Keown
Secretary-Cory Pierce
Treasurer-Vacant
Racquet Club Rep-Jack Brandon
Rafael Highlands Rep-Rich Rusdorf
Sun Valley East Rep-Linda Gridley
Sun Valley West Rep-Jane McKechnie & Jen Chicherio
Forbes Rep-Tom Jacobs

From: CHRISE de Tournay Birkhahn [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, August 1, 2022 11:49 AM
To: Catherine Quffa <Catherine.Quffa@cityofsanrafael.org>
Subject: Fwd: Re: Sun Valley Park Gazebo

Second email to Susan Andrade. No response.

Best,
Chrise de Tournay Birkhahn

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]
----- Original Message -----
From: CHRISE de Tournay Birkhahn [REDACTED]
To: Susan Andrade-Wax <Susan.AndradeWax@cityofsanrafael.org>
Date: 03/10/2022 9:28 AM
Subject: Re: Sun Valley Park Gazebo

Susan,
Thank you for keeping me in the loop.
What I would like to know most about is what the complaints are.
I have only heard rumors. But I am at a loss as to "patrons" and what their complaints would be - mine would be disrepair and lack of TLC on the part of the city.

As to neighbors, I am super curious about this. There are only a handful of neighbors, of which we are one (of three or four). Where can we see the actual complaints?

My concern is that a small vocal contingent wants the gazebo gone. Are the complaints made public? As I said before, we (and our next door neighbors) are the long timers - possibly one more on the south side. But really, we look upon it directly and all noise carries our way. Which really has been hardly any, even through the pandemic.

In any case, I am not a believer in removing a perfectly good structure but rather reviving, repairing and reusing it for the public enjoyment. So again, are there structural issues?

Thank you,

Chrise de Tournay Birkhahn
Chrise de Tournay Birkhahn

On 03/10/2022 8:55 AM Susan Andrade-Wax <susan.andradewax@cityofsanrafael.org> wrote:

Good Morning -

I just wanted to make sure that you received the attached notification in the mail and were aware that the wooden gazebo at Sun Valley Park will be discussed at the upcoming Park and Recreation Commission meeting on March 17th.

Please let me know if you have any questions or would like to further discuss.

Susan

Susan Andrade-Wax | City of San Rafael

LIBRARY AND RECREATION DIRECTOR

618 B Street
San Rafael, CA 94901
(415) 485 - 3340

<https://www.cityofsanrafael.org>

pronouns I use: She/Her(s)



SAN RAFAEL
THE CITY WITH A MISSION

The City of San Rafael is regularly evaluating our program offerings based on current public health orders. For information on our current hours and available programming, please visit our website at [Library & Recreation - San Rafael \(cityofsanrafael.org\)](https://www.cityofsanrafael.org)

From: CHRISE de Tournay Birkhahn [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, August 23, 2021 6:42 AM
To: Susan Andrade-Wax <Susan.AndradeWax@cityofsanrafael.org>
Subject: Sun Valley Park Gazebo

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Thank you,
Chrise de Tournay Birkhahn

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