

## **City of Hanford Parks**

### **SYNOPSIS**

The City of Hanford has drafted a 10-year plan for the city's park system. The Grand Jury decided to visit some of the city's parks to gather information on the condition and use of the facilities, and maintenance of the grounds at those parks. Hidden Valley Park was of particular interest because of the major residential growth in the northwest area of the city of Hanford.

### **WHY THE GRAND JURY INVESTIGATED**

Due to the growth of the Hanford city boundaries, population in North Hanford has increased in size, but the expansion of Hidden Valley Park has not taken place. Public interest in city parks, particularly Hidden Valley Park, has been sparked due to recent news articles which mention the possible sale of the undeveloped portion of the park.

### **AUTHORITY**

California Penal Code Section 925a. The Grand Jury may at any time investigate and report on the operations, accounts, and records of any city agency.

### **METHOD OF INVESTIGATION**

After interviewing the Park Superintendent and Recreation Supervisor, the Grand Jury conducted on-site inspections of parks in Hanford.

### **BACKGROUND AND FACTS**

Public Works Parks Division is overseen by a Parks Superintendent and two full time lead workers. There are fifteen full-time and two part-time maintenance staff members. The employees maintain 210 acres (172.5 park acres plus medians) throughout the city. There are workers in each park every day.

## **Hidden Valley Park**

the city. It attracts many visitors, and is in constant use. However, the entire park needs some improvements. The park is not handicapped-friendly. There is a need for additional parking spaces to provide off-street parking in this residential area. Some of the fixtures are in need of repair; there is a broken water faucet in the men's restroom, a broken drinking fountain, and graffiti on the ceiling of the covered picnic shelter. There are no bicycle racks, and only two sheltered picnic areas. There is a need for additional benches throughout the park.

Another attraction is the fishing pond which is restocked yearly. Fishing is a favorite year-round activity for both young and old. The city provides dog-waste stations, the restrooms are stocked with paper products, and the park grounds appear to be in good condition. The gazebo is used regularly for weddings and This is a 36-acre parcel, only half of which has been developed as a park. Mussel Slough runs through the east one-third of this park, separating it from the picnic area. While the City of Hanford currently has no specific plans to develop the rest of the acreage, the Grand Jury believes that the area should be utilized for additional park activities: walking trails, basketball courts, t-ball, small soccer field, an additional restroom, and additional parking for those using the park.

Hidden Valley Park is the only large, open-space facility on the northwest side of general play, and is a nice feature on the park grounds.

## **Centennial Park**

Centennial Park is a community park. The park at 14.4 acres is the largest developed park facility south of Highway 198. The only access to this Community Park is Hanford-Armona Road on the north perimeter of the park. The parking lot is located on the north central side, where it was noted that maintenance trucks were driving over the curb to access the park. There is a need for more parking and bike racks.

Walking trails to amenities are near the parking lot. Some are concrete and others are decomposed granite. Some of the concrete is uneven and is a safety hazard. The site includes two sets of picnic shelters with barbeques which need repair or replacement. There should be at least one more picnic shelter added. Additional picnic tables are placed through out the park, some of which are not leveled. It was noted that restrooms were not maintained up to standard.

The latest style up-to-date water feature has been installed. There are two playgrounds both of which have soft rubber-based material or sand, and one which was fenced for small and/or handicapped children. However, neither of the playgrounds is equipped with handicapped swings. The park has excellent walking trails, but it was noted depressions which need to be filled exist at the base of the light poles.

### **Coe Park**

Coe Park is a neighborhood park which consists of 4.1 acres. The park is located between Douty and Harris Streets south of Highway 198. There is adequate parking.

The west side of the park has one picnic shelter and there are benches under two canvas-covered shade structures. There is a water feature near the play area. There are two playgrounds with swings for the handicapped. There are permanently installed digging shovels used by children. The shovels have damaged the soft rubber-based padding underneath.

Handicap playground equipment is placed over a soft rubber-based surface, making it safer for children to play on. There was a raised concrete structure with a miniature roadway laid out similar to train track layouts where a child could run toy cars. We saw nothing like it in any other playground. There are two basketball courts. A pre-school building adjoined the park. A water feature with a recirculating, filtering pump was available for the warm months, creating a shower effect in a former wading pool.

The women's restroom was functional with no graffiti. The men's restroom had graffiti inside and out, and an employee was removing it. The employee said this is only the first or second time this was necessary. The building is coated with anti-graffiti paint to make it easier to remove.

### **Lacey Park**

Lacey Park is 2.7 acres, one city block, bordered by Florinda, Douty, Harris and Elm Streets. It is a popular and frequently used park in a central location, with adequate street parking on all four sides. It includes a wide variety of facilities, including a picnic shelter, restrooms, a water feature, two playgrounds for different ages, an open grass area with a backstop, and three basketball courts with lights.

The restrooms were clean, although the dryer in the men's restroom was broken, and there was no toilet paper available. Some of the padding around the playground area was damaged and in need of repair or replacing. A handicap swing was missing, and one of the toy cars was missing a steering wheel. The sprinkler system is out of adjustment, causing playground equipment to be very wet. The surface of the water feature has been damaged by skateboarders, according to park officials. It is anticipated that the surface area and water feature will be repaired and available for use by next summer.

There is one large covered picnic area with a large barbeque, and numerous mature trees provide natural shade. The basketball courts are frequently used and remain lighted until 10:00 P.M.

### **Earl F. Johnson Park**

Earl F. Johnson Park is a neighborhood park on 4.2 acres of land. The park is located across the street from Hanford High School and consists primarily of a large grassy area. The fixtures include a large gazebo at the northeast corner, a small playground area at the southwest corner, and a city water tower at the southeast corner of the park. The gazebo area is used primarily as a gathering spot by Hanford High School students. There are no picnic areas, benches, or restroom facilities. A local fraternal organization donated the only barbeque, but it has been bricked over and is no longer used. The grass area is patchy and uneven, although it is kept mowed by the city workers.

### **Freedom Park**

Freedom Park is a beautiful, far above-average community park. As Hanford's newest park, it comprises 16.7 acres of land on the east side of the city. It contains state of the art, innovative, handicap-friendly, playground equipment. There is a large, paved parking area. The park has two dog runs, one for large and one for small dogs. The concrete walking path goes all around the perimeter of the park, with a large grassy area in the center. A small amphitheater is available that can accommodate plays, puppet shows, or other performances. There is a water feature/splash pad, a disc golf course, three large sheltered picnic areas, and many benches throughout the park. Restroom facilities are clean and well-maintained, and the entire park is well-lighted.

## **FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Hidden Valley Park**

Finding 1 The undeveloped west half of Hidden Valley Park is not being utilized.

Recommendation 1 Due to the population growth of the northwest area of Hanford, it is recommended that, as originally planned, the undeveloped west half of Hidden Valley Park should be completed as a park for the community.

Finding 2 There are only two shaded pavilions with barbeques.

Recommendation 2 Due to the large amount of available developed and undeveloped space within the park, it is recommended that several more picnic pavilions be added.

Finding 3 There is inadequate parking available for public use.

Recommendation 3 Additional parking spaces should be developed for present use and future park expansion.

Finding 4 There is only one restroom facility within the park.

Recommendation 4 Additional restroom facilities should be built for present use and future park expansion.

### **Centennial Park**

Finding 1 Maintenance vehicles must drive over a curb to access the park grounds.

Recommendation 1 A driveway should be cut into the curb to allow access for maintenance vehicles.

Finding 2 Barbeques in picnic areas are rusted out and need to be replaced.

Recommendation 2 Replace or repair rusted barbeques.

Finding 3 Some areas of the concrete walkway are uneven and can be hazardous.

Recommendation 3 Repair the uneven walkway surfaces.

Finding 4 The depressions at the base of the light poles are a safety hazard.

Recommendation 4 The depressions at the base of the light poles should be filled.

Finding 5 It was noted that there were no swings available in the play area for handicapped use.

Recommendation 5 Add at least two swings for handicapped individuals.

**Coe Park**

Finding 1 The shovels in the playground area have damaged the soft rubber-based surface.

Recommendation 1 The shovels need to be repositioned.

**Lacey Park**

Finding 1 The dryer in the men's restroom was non-operational.

Recommendation 1 Repair or replace the dryer.

Finding 2 There was no toilet paper in the men's restroom.

Recommendation 2 Toilet paper containers should be checked frequently and refilled when necessary.

Finding 3 The padding was damaged under the playground equipment.

Recommendation 3 Repair or replace the padding.

Finding 4 A handicapped swing was missing.

Recommendation 4 Replace the swing.

Finding 5 The steering wheel of one of the toy cars was missing.

Recommendation 5 Replace the steering wheel.

Finding 6 The playground equipment was wet because the sprinklers were not properly adjusted.

Recommendation 6 Adjust the sprinklers.

Finding 7 The surface of the water feature has been damaged.

Recommendation 7 Repair the surface of the water feature.

**Earl F. Johnson Park**

Findings and Recommendations: None

**Freedom Park**

Findings and Recommendations: None

**COMMENTS**

These were the conditions at the time the Grand Jury toured the parks.

## **RESPONSE REQUIREMENT**

Penal Code Sections 330 and 330.05 require that a specific response to the findings and recommendations contained in this report be submitted to the Presiding Judge within 90 days of receipt of this report.