



Board Report

File #: A 20-317, **Version:** 1

- a. Find that identifying a site in an existing developed area of San Lorenzo Park for a memorial project is categorically exempt from CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15301 (Class 1), and
- b. Approve re-locating the Avenue of Honor Memorial at San Lorenzo County Park to an area located at the north end of the open turf field (Option 1);
- c. Direct staff to return with an agreement with the King City Young Farmers to develop and install individual markers and associated improvements within the specified area of San Lorenzo Park that recognizes South Monterey County residents who lost their lives in military action (Board of Supervisors Referral No. 2020.08).

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors:

- a. Find that identifying a site in an existing developed area of San Lorenzo Park for a memorial project is categorically exempt from CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15301 (Class 1), and
- b. Approve re-locating the Avenue of Honor Memorial at San Lorenzo County Park to an area located at the north end of the open turf field (Option 1);
- c. Direct staff to return with an agreement with the King City Young Farmers to develop and install individual markers and associated improvements within the specified area of San Lorenzo Park that recognizes South Monterey County residents who lost their lives in military action (Board of Supervisors Referral No. 2020.08).

SUMMARY:

In 2011 the King City Young Farmers installed a series of plaques memorializing South Monterey County residents who lost their lives in military action (aka "Avenue of Honor"). When Parks was added to RMA in 2016, an agreement allowing up to 75 markers along the entry road had expired and the area of the park where they were located had become overgrown and the plaques were deteriorating.

Since 2017, RMA has been working on a project to rehabilitate the "Avenue of Honor" in San Lorenzo Park. King City Young Farmers organization removed the markers to create new plaques and would like to relocate them to another area within the park. In February 2020, staff received Board of Supervisors Referral No. 2020.08 to relocate the new plaques to another area within the park once finished. The King City Young Farmers, along with community volunteers including a local architect has been working with staff to design and develop a proposed site design with the intent of creating a positive feature where the community can come together and appreciate the new plaques. Staff met with Supervisor Lopez and the group to review possible locations for re-locating the Avenue of Honor Memorial. Staff also consulted with the Monterey County Agricultural & Rural Life Museum (MCARLM) relative to their agreement to operate the museum in San Lorenzo Park. Options were narrowed down to two areas:

Option 1: North corner of the open turf field near the entrance of the upper parking lot. The area has good visibility and can accommodate the proposed design as well as has available space for possible future expansion. Staff finds that this area would have the least impact to existing park elements, features and reduced maintenance obligations. There would be no limit to the number of plaques with this location.

Option 2: Area between the existing parking lot and Gazebo. If this is the preferred location, it is recommended that the markers be designed to lower their height to avoid potential for injury and liability concerns from

adjacent active park uses. With this location, there would be a limit on the footprint within surrounding uses that would limit the number of plaques.

The Young Farmers have agreed to relocate their Avenue of Honor Memorial to the location identified as Option 1. This location lends itself to future expansion as a memorial facility versus being limited to a path (avenue). As such, staff proposes that there be no limit to the number of plaques as there was in the former agreement. RMA - Parks will continue to work with them on an agreement for this project since our existing agreement expired on December 31, 2016. Staff will return to your Board for consideration and approval of a new agreement between: 1) County agreeing to King City Young Farmers installing improvements within a specified area of San Lorenzo Park, and maintaining the area; and 2) King City Young Farmers agreeing to be responsible for the design, development, installation, repair, restoration and replacement of the markers. The Chair of the Board authorized staff to bring this matter directly to the full Board in order to establish an agreed location prior to the group expending additional resources.

DISCUSSION:

On June 21, 2011 the Board of Supervisors approved an agreement with the King City Young Farmers to develop and install up to 75 individual markers along the entry road into San Lorenzo Park to recognize South Monterey County residents who lost their lives in military action. These markers were installed, and a dedication ceremony took place in November of 2011. The project, and subsequently the entry road into the park, was named the *Avenue of Honor*. This agreement expired on December 31, 2016 (**Attachment A**), around the same time when Parks was added to RMA.

In exchange for County agreeing to provide space to place the markers at San Lorenzo Park, the Young Farmers were responsible for the design, development, installation, repair, restoration and replacement of the markers. In 2017, the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) was given \$500 from a private individual to restore the plaques as they were deteriorating and the area where they were located had become overgrown with vegetation. The VFW contacted RMA-Parks who in turn contacted the Young Farmers organization who were willing to assist under their Agreement with the County, even though the agreement had expired.

When this effort started, it was determined that the plaques could not be restored and required replacement. Over the past couple years, RMA worked with various project proponents to rehabilitate the “Avenue of Honor” and develop a new design to replace the plaques at their existing location. The following has been completed to date:

- Worked with community groups such as VFW, Young Farmers and MCARLM on the new design for the markers.
- Located (via GPS) the existing plaques and added them as a layer of information to the Park’s inventory, including the addition of specific information about each individual who is recognized.
- Worked with the VFW to identify other County residents who have also lost their lives in Military action after the original markers were installed, to be added to the Memorial.
- Removed/pruned overgrown vegetation in the area where the markers were located.
- Secured funding in the amount of \$6,000 from the Monterey County Parks Foundation to help fill the funding gap.
- Approved the removal of the existing plaques by the Young Farmers (Volunteer waiver forms signed) for redesign and fabrication of new plaques.

The project proponents proposed to relocate the new plaques to another location within the park so that they had better visibility. As per the County’s policy and process for accepting gifts, donations and improvements to

the County parks system, private projects within a County Park are presented the Parks Commission with options and assessment of proposed use of park space. **(Attachment B)** is a map illustrating the different areas considered. Staff completed an initial assessment of tasks for this project:

- Develop a conceptual design for the Avenue of Honor memorial by extending the pathway into the park to a reflective memorial area
- Add appropriate interpretive opportunities (recognizing the different branches of the military and/or the WWII airfield and other military history of the area).
- Design the new plaques (and setting) so that they are visible, attractive and respectfully recognize those who gave their ultimate sacrifice to our country.
- Assess how new improvements or expansion would fit within the existing character, and operation, of the park.
- Improvements shall be in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other applicable requirements and County standards
- Fundraising/Dedication ceremony (TBD)

In February 2020, Supervisor Lopez submitted Board of Supervisors Referral 2020-08 (**Attachment C**) to relocate the existing plaques at San Lorenzo Park that are a part of the Avenue of Honor, to another area within the park once the redesign and fabrication of the replacement plaques are finished. In response to the Board's referral, there have been meetings/discussions between staff and stakeholders where possible areas for relocation have been identified and evaluated:

Area 1; North end of open turf fields (Option 1)

North corner of the open turf field at the entrance of the upper parking lot. Staff finds that this site would have the least amount of impacts to existing park features and issues considered. The area has good visibility that can accommodate the proposed design and has available space for possible future expansion.

Area 2; Center of Park connecting from the parking lot to the Gazebo (Option 2)

Area between the upper parking lot and Gazebo behind the Agriculture and Rural Life Museum. This alignment became the project proponents preferred location after vacating the Eucalyptus Grove concept (Area 3). This option may require grading work for ADA compliance and presents challenges with trees (roots, branches, debris), mowing (around the plaques), and existing subsurface utilities in area. Due to potential liability concerns from nearby active park uses, it is recommended that this option be designed with a lower height of the markers.

Area 3; Eucalyptus Grove

Area between the upper parking lot and main entrance road behind the historic schoolhouse. The project proponents initially pursued this site. However, staff noted that this option may require significant grading work for ADA compliance and also presents challenges with trees (roots, branches, debris) and subsurface utilities in area, so the group considered another location.

Area 4; Horseshoe area (Main Entry)

Staff suggested this site, as there is existing parking adjacent to the area with the ability to design an accessible path of travel to the memorial area. Also, utilities are located close by if needed (e.g. electrical, water). It would require staff to restore/remove/relocate deteriorating, vintage agriculture equipment. There is also an opportunity to incorporate similar design features consistent with the new work at the park entry (Caltrans ROW, and future work at kiosk).

Area 5; Original location - Entry Road (“Avenue of Honor”)

Staff removed/pruned overgrown vegetation in the area where the markers were located and planned to add more ornamental plants (roses) to enhance the area. This area requires maintenance of the vegetation near the plaques. A mural could be painted on the wall as a background to the plaques. The proponents felt that they were not visible and to see them one would need to walk along the roadside to view the plaques, which was considered an inadequate way to honor those that sacrificed everything for this country.

Staff presented two paths for moving this proposal forward:

1. Re-install the plaques at their current location (under the existing agreement) while working on a long-term solution to relocate the Avenue of Honor Memorial to a different location within the park.
2. Process a new agreement for using a different area of San Lorenzo Park identified in Option 1.

Relocation will require a new agreement to be approved by the Board of Supervisors.

Stakeholders prefer one project to relocate the plaques, so staff has been working with the Young Farmers on the re-installation at a new location with the key objectives of visibility and accessibility. Staff will return with a new agreement to bring to the full Board for consideration.

CEQA

San Lorenzo Park is an existing park with active recreation areas improved for public use (e.g. turf, campground, playground, etc.), as well as passive recreation areas that are mostly in their natural condition (e.g. trails along Salinas River). Section 15301 of CEQA Guidelines exempts existing facilities as a Class 1 Exemption. This action would be a first step of the County’s intent to enter into an agreement for King City Young Farmers to “lease” a portion of the County Park. The subject area is currently developed with turf, parking, and ornamental landscape. Proposed improvements would involve negligible expansion beyond the existing use. As such, staff finds that this project qualifies as a Class 1 Categorical Exemption.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

RMA-Park staff is primarily working with King City Young Farmers and VFW on design. County counsel will be involved with a new Agreement between Monterey County and King City Young Farmers. MCARLM has been consulted on the proposal. On July 9, 2020, RMA-Parks provided an update to the Parks Commission informing them of the selected area.

Staff will develop and agreement with the Young Farmers and continue to work with other willing community volunteers or groups such as MCARLM, VFW, King City Chamber, and King City in Bloom.

FINANCING:

The County will provide space within San Lorenzo Park. Efforts for the design, development and final placement of the Avenue of Honor Memorial is supported by RMA-Parks. King City Young Farmers will manage the proposed project to relocate the markers and will also be responsible for the all costs associated with their installation, repair, restoration and replacement.

The replacement project was initially estimated at \$12,500, and was to be funded by outside parties consisting of a \$500 contribution from an anonymous donor, \$6,000 from Young Farmers, and \$6,000 in funds from the Monterey County Parks Foundation, which is a separate, non-profit entity. Staff understands that the King City Young Farmers will fully fund remaining costs of the project to relocate the plaques and will also be responsible for the all costs associated with their installation, repair, restoration and replacement. As such, it is not expected that General Fund money would be used; however, RMA is providing in-kind staff support for this effort on the design, development and final placement of the memorial plaques.

Prepared by: John Akeman, Park Planning Manager
Reviewed by: Shawnee Ellerbe, Assistant Director of RMA
Approved by: Carl P. Holm, AICP, RMA Director

Attachments are on file with the Clerk of the Board:

- A. Existing Agreement for the Avenue of Honor (Expired December 31, 2016)
- B. Map of locations for the Avenue of Honor
- C. Board Referral