



Board Report

File #: 17-1104, **Version:** 1

Public workshop to consider updates to the Monterey County Parks Volunteer Program.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Parks Commission:

- a. Conduct a public workshop on the County Parks Volunteer Program.
- b. Provide direction on policies and procedures regarding live-on residency rules and regulations, and strategies that can enhance the recruitment process.

SUMMARY:

The Parks Volunteer Live-On Program over the years has been an asset to Park operations. Many of the volunteers over the years have contributed immensely to the safe and coordinated efforts of various events county-wide, including cleanup and maintenance processes that take place during events held in the parks as well as maintenance and repair that they participate in during non-event times.

Volunteers are an integral part of the Buildings and Grounds Team. They work in most cases with Buildings and Grounds Staff and supervised by Buildings and Grounds Supervisors. Based on the Volunteer's expertise, they often work independently without direct supervision after they have been tasked with specific areas that need attention at each park.

Some of the proposed changes will be incremental due to the time needed for finalizing policy changes and possible re-writes. The goal to finalize this process is December 31, 2017. At that time, it is the hope of the RMA to have selected the Volunteer Coordinator.

DISCUSSION:

When RMA assumed management of County Parks, we found that policies were being implemented based on word of mouth. In many cases, staff charged to implement the policy did not have copies of the documents. When we inquired if there was a policy, it took some effort to find a copy of the policy. Once we did, we found that some of the policies have never been to the Board of Supervisors for approval and they were adopted a long time ago. RMA began an effort to locate all of the policies, review how they are being implemented, and bring each policy forward to determine if changes are needed.

The first policy RMA is bringing forward is regarding the Volunteer Program (**Attachment A**). Staff introduced this matter at a joint meeting of the Board Ad Hoc parks Committee and Parks Commission. This agenda item is to continue the discussion and receive direction for updating the Volunteer Program.

The County has a volunteer program that requires all volunteers to complete applications. As such, RMA implemented this requirement for all Park volunteers. When we receive an application, we conduct an informal interview to assess fit and review our policies. For example, if we have a volunteer to work on trails, we review specifically what trails will be worked on and how the work will be performed: trail specifications (width, slope, drainage), best management practices, habitat/species protections, safety, mechanical vs hand tools, etc.

The Volunteer Live-On Program was started in 2006, and has not been implemented consistently. Staff finds that there is need for a revamping of the policy. The program itself is strong in many areas; however, we need to enhance the recruitment efforts of volunteers. Improving the application process is key, as well as the oversight of the policies, procedures and rules of the program.

The stays of the live-on volunteers according to current policy is the following:

- Six month stay, followed by a 3-month separation
- County can revoke their stay and their volunteer assignment at any time
- Volunteer can leave the program on their own if they choose
- Volunteers can re-apply after the separation period

Most live-on volunteers have exceeded the current period, and it does not appear that there was any separation following prior assignment at other County Parks.

As a starting point, because we do not want to lose volunteers and the great things that they accomplish along with us, staff asked all existing volunteers to fill out an application if they wanted to continue the program and then be rotated to different parks sometime after the first of the year, with no break in service.

Attachment C illustrates fourteen live-on volunteers Countywide. As part of the re-application process, we received notice that a few of the long-term volunteers will be leaving the County altogether by December. Four new live-on volunteers recently began with us October 2017. By January, we will have nine live-on volunteers, of which most are couples. We also have several volunteers that are not live-on, but are community members who give of their time to assist us in the volunteer role.

Staff also researched if/how other agencies (County, State, Federal) operate such programs. A summary of those findings is included in **Attachment D**.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

RMA has worked with County Counsel, Human Resources, and Risk Management to updated forms/applications/process to current standards for liability and insurance requirements (Application form, **Attachment B**). RMA Human Resources will assist in accepting the application that will meet all legal standards, and also vet the applications of possible volunteer candidates prior to RMA/Parks conducting interviews and making final selections.

Prepared by: Cam Sanchez, Executive Management Specialist

Reviewed by: Shawne Ellerbe, RMA Deputy Director of Administrative Services

Approved by: Carl P. Holm, AICP, RMA Director

Attachments:

- A- Volunteer Program
- B- Volunteer Application Form
- C- Current Volunteers (matrix)
- D- Survey of Other Agencies