

PUBLIC COMMENT
PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY COMMISSION MEETING
JULY 16, 2020

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Members of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission-

I would like to bring up a question to you regarding the exploitation of the Yountville Community Park as a profit center in the towns budgeting process. I suggest to you that it is a good time to reconsider the idea of Pay to Play in public spaces and to explore the hardships created for neighbors by the “selling” of this park. Now, when the pandemic has necessitated an avoidance of gatherings, and the therapeutic value of nature and green space is suddenly front and center for our health, it is the perfect time to consider the question of whether this constant renting is a good idea and whether we want to continue this kind of commercialization of public parks in Yountville.

In the last few years the activity of the park, advertised and booked to create and exploit demand, has increased exponentially. There are large private gatherings almost every weekend in the spring, summer, and fall, as well as smaller parties using the smaller areas. This impacts the lifestyle of the residents on that street and subjects them to ever increasing noise, questionable behavior and lack of peace and privacy. When many of those residents moved there, it was a local park with a few community events and just normal, spontaneous use. Now there are big productions and a constant stream of people feeling entitled to a good time whether that infringes on the residents or not.

No other park in town has quite the same impact on nearby residents—other parks are either not right across from any residence or they are not commercialized to this extent. It is time to consider the residents around the Community Park over the desires of venue-seekers and the lure of profit. Public parks were never created to be profit centers. They were based on the concept of the commons; land owned by the community for the use and enjoyment of that community. That we have lost that thread is a sad statement on our modern drive to run everything like a business. In this drive, town officials have ignored the needs and desires of the surrounding residents.

I understand that the park was becoming a more and more popular destination and that locals were having a hard time guaranteeing a spot for their own use. Fine, use the reservation system to reserve areas for the locals (at a very small fee for the paperwork) and have the rest as first come, first served. As far as large parties and events—those should be restricted to maybe 1 or in special circumstances, 2 a month. It is unfair and actually unreasonable for the town to encourage and book constant events in that park without a thought of the impact on those neighbors. What happened to the idea of the rural, quiet lifestyle of Yountville? Is that only for some and not others? Does the council

and staff really have the right to impact these properties and the lives of the residents in such a negative way?

We need to be more mindful about how we shape Yountville for the future. Do we want to be an exclusive, hip, wine and food mecca focused on the money, or do we want to be that bucolic, relaxed place that reminds people to breathe and feel the beauty while enjoying all the other things we offer? Reconsidering how we treat open space and parks would go a long way toward making the town feel more like a town and less like an amusement park that only has high dollar attractions.

If the Town and the PRAC can consider such things as acoustifence and hours limitations for residents near the pickleball courts, they should also consider the requests of residents across the street from the Community Park when they request mitigations of the impacts of the activities and infrastructure that negatively affect their lives. I call on you to explore this idea in a public meeting and solicit public comment to enable you to discuss this specific community issue of the use of a public park and to facilitate a possible recommendation to the Council.

Thank you for your consideration.

Pam Reeves • XXXX Jefferson Street