

**Hahamongna Watch Report**  
**Sycamore Grove Field Grant Analysis**  
**Prepared for the Windsor/Arroyo and Hahamongna Communities**  
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**04/30/2011**  
**Updated - 06/25/2012**

This report questions the legitimacy of the City of Pasadena (the City) applying for and obtaining a \$1MM grant from the State of California to construct the soccer field "Sycamore Grove Field" in Hahamongna Watershed Park.

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In November 2004, The City applied for and received a \$1MM grant under the State of California:

2002 Resources Bond Act  
YOUTH SOCCER and RECREATION DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM  
California Clean Water, Clean Air, Safe Neighborhood Parks,  
And Coastal Protection Act of 2002  
October 2003  
State of California – The Resources Agency  
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

The City of Pasadena received the maximum grant amount of \$1MM.

The purpose of the grant is to fund the construction of Sycamore Grove Field, a full size youth soccer field on the west side of Hahamongna Watershed Park (Hahamongna). The City will use \$1.5MM in unspent grant money from 1992 and 1996 bond measures to make up the \$2.5MM required to build the field.

The initial approval for Sycamore Grove Field was made in August 2003 when the Hahamongna Park Plan (HWP Plan) was approved under the Arroyo Seco Master Environmental Impact Report (ASMP MEIR). The ASMP MEIR was approved in May 2003. The grant application was submitted in November, 2004.

The construction of new playing fields in Hahamongna has been the topic of controversy within the City of Pasadena for many years -- the City's need for new playing fields conflicting with the local community's desire to preserve Hahamongna's natural environment. While the City classifies the area planned for the playing field as "ruderal" and "developed", its proximity to riparian habitats causes concern. A study of the grant eligibility requirements and the Public Resources Code governing the grant raises questions. To receive the maximum grant amount under the Bond applicants had to demonstrate that:

- The field will be located “in a low-income urban area with high Youth crime and a high unemployment rate”.
- The field will be “in a densely populated area”.
- The field will have “long daily operating hours which include 3-7p.m. for Youth on weekdays”.
- There is “strong community support and collaboration”.

The CA Parks and Recreation Department drew up the grant eligibility guidelines based on an addition to SEC.2. Section 5004.5 (d) of the CA Public Resources Code:

“The department shall also develop eligibility guidelines for the award of grants that give preference to those communities that provide matching funds for grants, and that are heavily populated, low-income, urban areas with a high youth crime and unemployment rate. The guidelines shall also require that preference be given to those inner city properties that may be leased for periods of at least five years or more for recreational purposes.” (Bold added)

The City states on page 8 of its grant application “The Project is clearly located in a low-income urban area with high youth crime and high under-employment and unemployment rates”. However, in the City’s introductory letter to the CA Parks and Recreation Department the City states the field will bring youth “to play in one of the last remaining natural open spaces in our region”.

While the intent of Sycamore Grove Field might be to serve youth from a disadvantaged area of Pasadena, the field itself is not located where those children live as is required to receive the maximum grant. The facts:

1. Sycamore Field is 1.6 miles by road from the nearest house in Pasadena.
2. The Field is 1.7 miles from the nearest Pasadena elementary school, and 2 miles from John Muir High School attended by many of the target youth.
3. The City cites the Villa Parke Soccer League as a flagship beneficiary of the new field. Villa Parke is 6.5 miles from the field.
4. The City claims the field is easily accessible by car, bicycle, or bus. Bus service is limited to Hahamongna Watershed Park. There is one bus stop 0.5 miles from the site. A child taking the bus will have a half mile walk from the bus stop to the field. From Villa Parke it is at least 45 minutes by bus, and this includes a transfer. The single 287 bus service runs at 30 minute intervals only.

In contrast:

5. The field is 0.2 miles from La Canada High School – the public high school serving the community of La Canada Flintridge.

6. The field is 0.5 miles from St Francis High School, and 0.7 miles from Flintridge Preparatory School – both these schools are well known private schools.
7. The nearest residence in La Canada Flintridge is 0.5 miles away.

The immediate advantage of the field goes not to urban communities in Pasadena with high youth crime and unemployment, but to La Canada Flintridge one of the wealthiest communities in California.

Based on this analysis the location of the new field ensures it can only act as an inaccessible satellite location for the intended beneficiaries of the grant. This violates the requirements laid out in the public resources code.

The grant points to the need for “well lit” recreation facilities for urban youth. To meet the highest score on the grant application the field must be open between 3-7 p.m. during the school year. This requires lighting most of the year. However, the City’s Arroyo Seco Design Guidelines section 5.2.1 #9 governing Hahamongna Watershed Park states:

“Permanent or temporary lights are not allowed on multi-purpose fields.”

The City cannot fulfill the requirements of the grant without changing their approved Design Guideline and installing lighting.

A requirement to receive the grant was that the project has “strong community support”. In its application the City states:

“Sycamore Grove Field has proven strong community support. The project exists because it was part of a very extensive and thorough community process as part of the Arroyo Seco Master Plan.”

The facts:

1. All the supporting letters in the City’s 2004 grant application – to demonstrate “strong community support” -- were from soccer organizations or politicians. There were no letters of support from local community or environmental groups.
2. Most public comment on the ASMP EIR in April 2003 (just over a year prior to the City’s grant application) focused on the need to maintain the natural environment in Hahamongna. None supported the building of soccer fields.
3. In August 2003 - one year prior to the grant application and just 3 months after the approval of the ASMP MEIR - community opposition forced the City Council to remove two new playing fields, two new parking lots, a bus turnaround lane, and road widening planned for the east side of Hahamongna. The proposed site of these developments was adjacent to the target community in the grant -- much closer than the planned Sycamore Grove Field. The impact of the proposed developments and the construction of soccer fields in a natural area met strong community opposition.

4. At the July 5 2010 City Council meeting there was an agenda item to re-consider the construction of the Sycamore Field; this was in acknowledgement of the controversy and opposition over moving ahead. Out of 40 public speakers, not one spoke in favor of building a new soccer field in Hahamongna Watershed Park. The Council voted 5-4 to move ahead with the field. However, the Mayor requested staff to prepare a list of alternative sites for consideration.

The construction of Sycamore field has never held “strong community support” as required to obtain the grant.

In the grant application, the City states the field is “adjacent” to a natural area. A full size under 14 soccer field is 75 yards wide by 120 yards long. At its widest point, the site in the grant application is 60 yards wide; at most points it is only between 20 to 40 yards wide. The grant application fails to mention that construction of the field will involve extending the proposed site east into an area that floods frequently and is currently part of the stream zone. Expansion west is limited due to power lines. The photographs below show the proposed site and dimensions:

The width between the logs in the foreground and in the distance is 35 yards. An additional 40 yards is needed to meet the minimum width requirement.



The additional 40 yards extends through the stream zone. The City plans sycamore plantings beyond the field as a buffer – the “sycamores” in “Sycamore Grove” do not currently exist. The development will extend well into the flood zone and riparian habitats.



Full view of the site looking west. Circled area is where fill is needed to create the full size pitch.



The re-configuration of debris in the basin caused by the Station Fire means the stream now flows along the west edge of Hahamongna. The construction of the soccer field will alter the current stream flow. Fill will come from removing mature riparian willow habitat to the south of the site.

While the City stated in the grant application that the CEQA process is complete for Sycamore Field, this was over eight years ago under the ASMP MEIR. To comply with CEQA, the City will have to

conduct a full EIR prior to construction on the field. The EIR process requires public comment and consideration of less impactful alternatives.

City staff prepared a list of alternate sites per the Mayor's request at the City Council meeting on July 5. The sites are all in populated areas, some directly in the area the City states it intends to serve with Sycamore Field – see Attachment 1.

Renovation of this John Muir HS playing field is one alternative in the staff report.



### **CONCLUSIONS:**

The State of California was negligent in granting the City of Pasadena the maximum \$1MM grant from to build Sycamore Grove Field in one of the “last remaining natural areas in the region”. Constructing the field will violate SEC.2. Section 5004.5 (d) of the CA Public Resources Code for the following reasons:

1. The field will not be **in** a neighborhood with high youth crime and unemployment.
2. The field will not be **in** a densely populated neighborhood.
3. The field will be located next to one of the wealthiest communities in California.
4. Casual use of the field as required under the bond by the target beneficiaries will be impossible.
5. The field is inaccessible to the target beneficiaries.
6. The field will need to be lit for long periods that violates the City's own guidelines for lighting in the Arroyo Seco.
7. The dimensions of the field mean it will extend across the current stream zone and into riparian habitats.

8. There is no community support for the field – to the contrary there is immense opposition.
9. The City’s claim in the grant application that the CEQA process is “complete” is untrue.
10. The City has ignored the options under the grant to renovate existing fields or to acquire land through the grant to build new fields. The grant does not explicitly state that the money should be used for new fields or even soccer fields alone.

To avert further controversy and the possibility of a legal challenge the City should:

- Consider the alternatives before the EIR process proceeds.
- Commit to spend the grant money where the intended beneficiaries can easily reap the greatest benefit.

The CA Department of Parks and Recreation is obligated to ensure the City to comply with the requirements of the grant and the public resources codes.

**ATTACHMENT 1**



**MEMORANDUM – CITY OF PASADENA  
Human Services and Recreation Department**

**July 27, 2010**

**TO: Michael J. Beck, City Manager**

**FROM: Patsy Lane, HS&R Department Director**

**SUBJECT: CURRENT STATUS OF SITES SUGGESTED FOR NEW FIELDS IN E-MAIL FROM PETREA  
BURCHARD SANDEL DATED JULY 18, 2010**

The following information addresses the current status of sites suggested by Petrea Burchard Sandel in an e-mail dated July 18, 2010, for consideration to develop new sports fields.

**SUGGESTED SITES WITHIN PASADENA**

**1. Washington Blvd. & Sierra Madre Blvd., east of Pasadena High School**

**Ownership:** Los Angeles County – utilized by County Public Works and Flood Control

(adjacent to flood control channel, etc.)

**Size:** Approx. 3 acres (of which approx. 2 acres available for one potential full-size field,



restrooms, lighting and on-site parking)

**Status:** City working with County to negotiate potential lease

**Summary.**

The City first identified this Los Angeles County-owned property for potential development of sports field use in approximately 2000, and soon after the site was first listed in the City's Capital Improvement Program (C.I.P.) for such proposed use. In approximately 2002, a non-profit organization stepped forward and committed to secure private funding to lease the property from the County and develop sports fields on site to benefit Pasadena youth; accordingly, the City stepped aside. The private group made significant progress in developing a design and securing the required Conditional Use Permit to develop and light the property for field use, but in about March 2010 the City was asked to take the lead on this project. Since April 2010 City staff has met with County real estate principals; developed a draft lease now in review with the County; walked the site with the County Flood Control leadership to identify portions of the property that are *not* available for field development due to continuing Flood Control testing, training and other on-site activities which must remain; secured required paperwork to extend the C.U.P.; and a revised site plan (to accommodate such County-required space setbacks) is in process, along with a project cost estimate.

While the available site was initially described as approximately three acres, the County lease will require maintaining secure Flood Control access to test pits and for other training and Flood Control uses, which reduces the usable field and parking area to about two acres. Also, the location has historically been utilized from December 15 to January 15 each year by the Tournament of Roses for staging key Post Parade equipment and activities, so assuming continuation of that use, field access will be prohibited one month each year. However, assuming successful negotiation of appropriate lease terms and funding to complete the project, this is a very promising site for one full-size soccer field with on-site restrooms, parking and lighting.

**2. Rose Bowl – Convert Current Paved Parking Area Southwest of the Stadium to Turf**

**Ownership:** City of Pasadena

**Summary and Status.** Existing contracts for the Rose Bowl (such as that with UCLA) require a specified minimum number of paved parking spaces, including paved areas to accommodate buses and other heavy equipment and vehicles. While the specifics are being researched to reflect any recent modifications, it appears the current number of paved spaces meets the requirements but does not exceed them. The requirement for such paved areas is key to safely accommodate the high volume of buses and other heavy transportation vehicles and equipment for large Rose Bowl events. Also, because artificial turf cannot be utilized for parking or heavy equipment, any fields proposed for this area that may also accommodate parking for certain events, would have to be natural turf.

Rose Bowl management is currently reviewing with their architect whether existing space could be modified to accommodate a new field. For example, a turf/out of bounds area on the west side of Brookside Golf Course is being analyzed to determine whether a field (likely a youth-sized field, given the space configuration) could be added at this location and, if so, whether it could incorporate appropriate safety measures (netting, etc.) to prevent golf balls from entering the field area. Additional information from this review is expected within 60 days.

### **3. John Muir High School – Casitas Street at Montana (North Side of Montana) AND Open Area at Casitas and Wyoming**

**Ownership:** Pasadena Unified School District

#### **Status and Summary.**

Muir High School currently has three campus areas which are actively used for school sports, after school, evening and weekend youth field sports activities. Several of the fields continue to be utilized even though heavy, frequent use has worn down the turf and some portions may appear to be vacant dirt lots. In consultation with PUSD, no vacant areas at Muir to develop a new field have been identified.

Muir’s “North” field (north side of Montana Street at Casitas) includes a soccer/ multipurpose field at the west end (adjacent to the parking lot) and a baseball field (which the City provided funding to improve in 2008) at the east end.

Muir’s “Central” field (south side of Montana from Casitas to Canada) was refurbished in Summer 2009 with a track and artificial turf multipurpose field (serving as the Muir home location for football and other school and community sports activities).

Muir’s “South” field (enter from Canada at the south, between Lincoln and Montana; extends to Wyoming and Forest) has a large multipurpose field used by school and community groups for soccer as well as softball.

### **4. Washington School Campus (Penn St/Raymond/Marengo)**

**Ownership:** Pasadena Unified School District

#### **Status and Summary.**

Washington School Campus currently has three fields in service during school hours, evenings and weekends, located at the north end of the campus along Penn Street, including a field in the center of the track. The fields are very highly used by school, city and community sports activities and, due to

limited availability of funding for maintenance and turf replacement, have areas where the turf has worn down to dirt.

In PUSD's proposed new construction plan for Washington School, two fields would be refurbished and remain available for use; the third field would be replaced by installation of three new tennis courts and a few additional school amenities. The net *loss* to the school and the community will be one athletic field.

#### **5. Webster Elementary School Campus (E. Washington Blvd. at Pepper Dr.)**

**Ownership:** Pasadena Unified School District

**Status and Summary.**

Webster Elementary's Lower Playground has one small multi-use field, approx. 33 yards x 66 yards, which is utilized for various youth sports activities as well as a playground area during school hours and after school programming by the Pasadena LEARNs, City After School Playground Program and other related activities.

#### **6. Fair Oaks and Walnut (former Pasadena Athletic Club location)**

**Ownership:** Privately owned

**Status and Summary.**

This location actually involves two properties: 25 W. Walnut, consisting of six parcels, and 233 N. Fair Oaks (one parcel). One of the properties is in the sale process, with the understanding that the new buyer intends to develop the site. The other parcel is not available at this time, as it appears tied up in complex legal and financial matters related to the failure of a major global financial services business. The site is unlikely to be available for use in the near future and, without the adjacent parcel, does not appear to offer sufficient space to accommodate development of a sports field, off-street parking and restroom facilities.

### **SUGGESTED SITES IN ALTADENA**

The purpose of developing additional fields is to serve the needs of Pasadena residents. The cost of acquiring, developing and maintaining a field is significant, with the goal of improving access for Pasadena residents. Accordingly, the City of Pasadena is not presently exploring properties in other communities.

**ADDITIONAL QUESTION: WHY CITY AND SCHOOL FIELDS ARE SOMETIMES “VACANT” DURING AFTER SCHOOL, EVENING OR WEEKEND HOURS.**

Natural turf fields cannot tolerate unlimited use by hard impact sports. Excessive hard-impact play is a primary reason that natural turf fields deteriorate to what some describe as “dirt lots”. In order to prevent such deterioration and to promote a safe playing surface for our residents, City fields must limit hard impact sports play on natural turf fields to no more than 35-40 hours per week. Accordingly, there are times during the week when a field is prohibited for use by organized sports, which serves to: 1) “rest” the field and prevent overuse and deterioration; 2) allow residents time to engage in passive recreation activities on City fields; and 3) prevent full-time daily impact of organized sports on neighbors.

Many PUSD fields are not lighted, so they close at dark.

Please contact me if you have any questions or require additional information.

c: Martin Pastucha