

## Southshore Little League reveals park revitalization plans

Contributed by Elizabeth Larson  
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CLEARLAKE &ndash; The Southshore Little League has big plans for Redbud Park's ballfields, a vision group representatives shared with the Clearlake City Council last Thursday.

Lee Lambert, Southshore Little League's president, and Lori Peters, a minor player agent with the league, presented the rehabilitation and revitalization plan for Redbud Park's sports facility.

The group, which has been in existence 50 years, serves children ages 5 through 15, and turns no one away due to lack of funds, said Lambert.

Lambert said the league created a committee for redeveloping the park's ball fields. Currently, the park has two ballfields that are unkempt, besides a &ldquo;severely deteriorated&rdquo; softball field.

The league's goal is to upgrade the park and its fields, which Lambert said provide more than 3,000 children with a place to recreate outdoors.

Proposed work includes renovating the fields and dugouts, installing new sod, sprinklers and bleachers; building handicapped-accessible restrooms, an outdoor dining area and kitchen facility; installing security and night game lighting; and building a pavilion, conference room and storage area.

Peters, who also is the Clear Lake Chamber's executive director, has put her grant-writing skills to work on the group's behalf, with Lambert reporting that the league is in line to receive a \$200,000 grant. They'll know soon if they'll receive the funds.

Lambert said the league plans to approach local clubs and organizations to seek assistance. They hope to construct the fields through volunteer labor, which will cut costs by as much as 55 percent.

Peters added that many social and business organizations already have pledged their support for the project.

Lambert said the newly renovated park would be closed at dark and reopened in the mornings, in order to keep it safe from vandalism, which has been a frequent problem. Council member Joyce Overton suggested that they put up lockable gates around the dugouts, because she didn't believe locking the entire park would prevent damage.

Barry Johnson, whose company, Superior Acquisitions Inc., owns the Outrageous Waters property, sent the city a letter offering to donate the water park's eight batting cages to the city. Southshore Little League asked the city to donate those for inclusion in the park plan.

Vice Mayor Chuck Leonard said he thought that Lower Lake High School had wanted the batting cages, and said he preferred Johnson donate the cages directly to the group of his choice and not have the city act as an intermediary.

&ldquo;I'm impressed with what all of you have done,&rdquo; Mayor Curt Giambruno told Lambert and Peters, adding that he hopes they can pull it off in the proposed five-year span.

Giambruno said he spoke to Johnson about the batting cages. According to Giambruno, Johnson &ndash; who grew up in Clearlake and played Little League there himself &ndash; stated he would prefer the cages go to the league. However, he said he would leave the decision, ultimately, up to the city.

&ldquo;Barry is just waiting for the council to accept the donation to the city,&rdquo; said Giambruno.

Neiman said Johnson also told him that he would prefer the Little League receive the equipment.

However, because the city doesn't have the money to take them down, reinstall or insure them, the council said the league would have to take those responsibilities if they wanted the cages.

Council member Judy Thein made the motion for the city to accept the cages and pass them on to Southshore Little League, with Overton seconding. The vote was 4-1, with Leonard voting no.

Lambert said the cages will be open to the public and supervised by a league representative.

The council asked Lambert and administrative staff to come back with a draft use agreement to determine the responsibilities of the city and the league, including use of the fields for soccer games.

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