

# TAKE BACK OUR PARKS – 2011 Mayoral Questionnaire

TONY HALL

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1. Currently RPD management is seeking to convert the Department into an enterprise agency and end General Fund support, effectively making a commodity out of the commons.

a. What is your thinking about removing the Recreation & Park Department from the General Fund and transforming it into an enterprise agency?

I am absolutely opposed. R/P Dept is one of the primary services that should be provided for from general fund.

b. Will you continue this RPD privatization strategy?

No

c. If you oppose this strategy, what would be your approach to funding the RPD?

Complete administrative rehaul to straighten out the incompetence of the R/P Dept.

d.

e. Do you believe the RPD operations should be supported by tax dollars?

Yes

2. The Department recently fired its recreation staff who delivered services to children and families, hired supervisors to outsource programming, and added a highly paid property management team to lease out recreation and park facilities.

a. Do you think this model should be reversed, and if so, what would be your plan to providing those services?

Yes, this model should be thrown out and the original mission, purpose and funding for that department re-instituted as was intended by the City Charter.

3. According to figures gleaned from the Controller's office, in 2009 the City laid off nearly 2,000 employees who were the interface with the public and whose average cost to the City was \$37,000 for a "savings" of \$70 Million, and at the same time added 779 management employees whose average pay was \$147,000 for a total cost of \$115 Million.

a. Would you reverse this practice and reduce management and use the savings to hire employees who provide direct services to the people?

Absolutely, positively, yes, yes, yes.

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- b. Are you aware that RPD is hiring hundreds of outside recreation providers who are limited to 16 hours/week with no benefits to replace former recreation directors? Do you approve of this policy? No
4. The Recreation and Park Department has been aggressively marketing and leasing out clubhouses to private entities. In many cases this has resulted in loss of clubhouse use for the neighboring communities.
- a. How would you ensure that neighboring communities have regular access to clubhouses?  
I would reverse such a ridiculous policy. The R/P Director and administrators are only interested in revenue that they can spend for political purposes and not in service to the public.
5. The Recreation and Parks Department has proposed to develop the western end of Golden Gate Park by building a large artificial turf soccer sports complex with 60 foot tall stadium lights. This project will destroy the naturalistic landscape character of the western end of Golden Gate Park. The woodland character of the western end of Golden Gate Park is supported by both the 1998 Golden Gate Park Master Plan and the 2004 National Register of Historic Places application. Both of these documents were written by the Department of Recreation and Park and yet, they are being violated by this project.
- a. As mayor, would you oppose changing the Beach Chalet fields into a soccer complex with artificial turf and 60 foot lights? Yes, Yes, Yes
- b. Would you direct the Department to renovate the Beach Chalet soccer fields with real grass and no lights? Possibly, depending upon further details relating to parking, neighborhood impact etc.
- c. Renovating the Beach Chalet fields with real grass will save bond funding that could be used in other parks. Would you direct the Department to use the remainder of the bond funding to fix up other parks? Yes
6. The Recreation and Parks Department is allowing the SF PUC to build a 40,000 square foot recycled water plant in Golden Gate Park, in the area north of the Murphy windmill, contrary to the Golden Gate Park Master Plan.
- a. Do you support Golden Gate Park as a landscape park as described in the Master Plan?  
Yes
- b. Do you oppose any more new buildings in Golden Gate Park? Yes

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- c. Would you direct the Recreation and Park Department and the SFPUC to find other locations for the water treatment factory outside of Golden Gate Park? Yes
  - d. If the SFPUC refuses to move the project, would you uphold the charter and put a measure on the ballot to vote on the placement of this building in Golden Gate Park? Yes
7. The Historic Preservation Commission has proposed to make Golden Gate Park a Historic District. Do you support this proposal, and why or why not? Yes, because of its history as relates to S.F.
8. On May 11, 2011, RP Commission President Mark Buell explained to a Commonwealth Club audience that he views the RP Commission as primarily responsible to respond to RP Department Staff. There was no mention of focus by the Commission on the public's proposals. The Commission has not demonstrated a track-record of incorporating public feedback.
- a. How would you make the RP Commission more responsive to the public? By appointing people who serve the common good first, not politics.
9. What, if any, changes would you make to the management and priorities of the San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department? I would replace all top level management with competent people who actually know about managing the Department
10. Currently the Mayor appoints all seven members of the RP Commission and the General Manager, which has resulted in near 100% approval of staff proposals and nearly uniform dismissal of citizen objections.
- a. Do you support a more balanced approach to appointments to the Recreation and Park Commission, such as split appointments between the Board of Supervisors and the Mayor? It depends who the Mayor is and who the members of the Board are.
11. The non-resident entry fee to the Arboretum has proven to be a financial failure and resulted in a dramatic reduction in visitation by both non-residents and by residents.
- a. Have you reviewed the data and concerns of the public about the fee and this path to privatizing the Botanical Gardens? Yes
  - b. Would you be willing to introduce and support legislation to eliminate the fee? Yes
12. Implicit in past public support for the Recreation and Parks Department has been a promise that our parks will continue to be free and our clubhouses will remain open to everyone.
- a. Would you willing to place a higher priority for General Fund support to the Rec & Park Department? Yes

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- b. Can you explain why we are being denied what we have already paid for, with fees for park entry and new rental charges for clubhouse use? Greed, stupidity, and exploitation of the common person for political gain
13. Should you become mayor, would you continue the policies of committing tens of millions of tax dollars in subsidies to the wealthy like Larry Ellison and Twitter and continue to deny sufficient general fund money to hire more gardeners, custodians and recreation directors to maintain our parks and staff our playground clubhouses? Absolutely not.