

E-MAILS REGARDING PARK IMPROVEMENT PLAN SHOWN AT COMMUNITY MEETING #4 ON 11/13/13

IN SUPPORT

Received Via Email (11-20-13): Hi - This email is a little late but I was unable to attend the final (which was after the final) meeting for this project. I'm very much in favor of the proposed plan from the 2nd & 3rd meetings. More so, I'm disappointed that the process and renovation has been hijacked by a vocal minority of people who showed up to the meeting, many of whom don't even live in the neighborhood. Regarding the tennis court:

- the high fence it requires is an eyesore which breaks up the tiny park
- I have NEVER seen so many people using it as the time around the 3rd meeting when the vocal tennis players rallied people from all over the city to come and play there, it won't take long before it is an empty space again
- to devote ~25% of the non-playground area of the park to a space that only 2-4 people can use at a time is nonsensical
- every non-tennis use of the court mentioned by its supporters could be better done on grass or the basketball court

Regarding the blacktop:

- this is a legitimate concern as Rec & Park has been unable to create proper drainage at most parks. My company rents a lot of field space (at a cost of ~\$100k/year) so I know first hand how bad many of the fields are after even relatively light rain - if Rec & Park has learned from previous issues and has better plans to properly drain the grass areas (complete excavation, gravel layer, membrane, steep slope, underground tie-in to storm drains, etc) then I think sharing that information would make a huge difference in people's opinions.
- most people are also ignoring the fact that the proposed "people grass area" is in the sunniest part of the park so it will dry out fastest
- could we consider installing turf in that area to help with drainage?

Regarding dogs:

- I have a dog whom I've been taking to that park for over 11 years since she was a puppy and I even built the plastic bag & tennis ball holder (which has since been vandalized so I stopped maintaining it) so I'm an advocate for continuing to allow dogs
- that said, there are clearly many, many irresponsible dog owners
- I think that the proposed stanchions would help but even more so having dog owners self-police. If there is a threat that the park would be closed for all dogs, then I think many more dog owners would step up and reprimand people who take their dogs into other areas of the park

Final thoughts:

- whatever happens PLEASE install motion activated floodlights so that the park can be used in the late afternoon & early evening during the winter months and also to deter the vandals and others from abusing the park at night

Thanks for reading through all this!

Received Via Email (11-17-13): I've heard that this is the last day to send in comments re: the Noe Courts renovation. I was surprised when I couldn't find any info. on the website about where to send comments via email. Luckily, I remembered your name....

I attended the last meeting and was impressed by how much work has been done to accommodate all of the neighborhood groups. I live on Jersey Street, have a new dog, and unfortunately was out of town for the first three meetings. I was one of the three people who voted by hand for the option which included the sharing of the tennis/basketball/mixed use area. After the meeting it struck me that the tennis

group at that meeting really is not interested in compromise. They want their court so much that they would be willing to give up the grassy area that everyone (except dogs) could use and is so sorely needed in Noe Valley. So if I had to vote again, I guess I would vote to get rid of the court completely.

An important point I did not bring up at the meeting: the dog area must be completely enclosed by a wall or fence that they can not jump over (i.e. > 2 ft/ high) . I realize that this is not a leash-free park, but dogs do "get away" and tend to follow people and other dogs right out of the park. If a ball gets out of the dog area, the dog(s) will follow it, and where they go, there will be dog waste. It would be best for everyone involved if the dog area was truly enclosed.

We look forward to your final decision, and I truly hope it still includes a grassy area that everyone can enjoy except our dogs.

Received Via Email (11-17-13): I was at the meeting on Wednesday evening November 13th, but left before the "dot" (?) vote was taken. Evidently, the majority of those present preferred to maintain the physical status quo of the park. I hope that is not the final decision, but fear that it is. If I am not mistaken, that means the neighborhood will be left with an "dogs permitted on leash" park as well as both existing court areas - the well used multi use/ball court and the sparingly used tennis court. Maybe that's a win-win for some: The tennis court remains for those who can't get in a set at Dolores Park; the park is still designated "dogs on leash" for those who don't think the city should be creating more off leash parks; and the "dog community" can expect the same level of enforcement as has been the case over the last couple of decades.

I am very disappointed. I think much good work on all your parts as well as on the part of Lizzie Hirsch, Supervisor Wiener's staff, and other Recreation and Park staff went in to designs and a community involvement process that would result in better areas for people to have a relatively canine free park experience, a well defined "dog friendly" [read off leash] area, so as to accommodate as many current and would be park users as possible.

Personally, I hope the vote taken last Wednesday is not the final word. However, if that is the case, perhaps something along the lines of the 2011 landscaping design could be implemented along with restroom and drainage improvements.

I guess I could try my hand at tennis once more (it's been at least 25 years), and, should I and my wife outlive our two house cats, we could purchase a small canine to enjoy the "dogs on leash" part of the park.

Thanks again for all your efforts.

Received Via Email (11-13-13): A. Process: If tennis players used the courts in excess of what your surveys show, they would have seen the meeting announcements posted at multiple locations in the park JUST like the rest of us did and shown up to the earlier meetings. "But, but, but, we didn't think you were going to tear out the tennis court." True, but they would have shown up anyway, to plead their case that the tennis courts are in "such disrepair" and need to be included in the refurbishment. They simply don't like the idea of losing a court, but they don't use the court in large numbers and didn't care about the condition of the court enough to show up at the first opportunity to make sure that they're repaired....but I'm not arguing for getting rid of the tennis court. I'm arguing that it's not heavily used. The solution has to take that into account. I prefer Option A (originally Option 3), BUT the shared basket ball-tennis court is the most reasonable compromise, so I accept Option B (with qualifications I'll discuss later).

B. Usage: You're never going to get rid of the dogs. It's a 15,000 year relationship, and they're one of the largest users of Noe Valley Courts. Dogs are ever-present in the park, but they only dominate two brief times during the day, morning and afternoon. Pretending that park space for dogs isn't needed or

manageable is a denial reality, and a cruel one. The answer is compromise and management. Option B does it best. The idea that a 3 feet fence is too low is a ridiculous claim made by people who just don't like the idea. In the rare instance that a dog jumps the fence, it's a totally manageable situation. Dogs (normally all over the courts) are giving up a lot of territory with Option B, and they seem to be the only ones willing to compromise. Let's honor that good-faith effort.

C. Option B. What's with the "Community Meeting space" in the middle of Option B? That's what the new Noe Valley Town Square on 24th between Sanchez and Vicksburg is for. Keep the eye on the prize, maximizing usable grass in Noe Valley Courts. Lose the Community Meeting space. If you must, stick some tables over between the Court and the people-only space. People can picnic there and have access to the grass and chalkboard. And lose the uselessly narrow strip of grass between the children's playground and the path. It's ornamental at best. Put the path up against the playground, and let the existing fence serve as a railing.

Option C: Awful

D. Controversy. People are drawn to it. Option B (really just an improvement of Option A (except for the Community Meeting space)) would have gotten more votes if people did not feel like they had to defend previous work against the late latecomers. Option D (doing nothing) is obstruction by those who couldn't be bothered to show up and participate interactively and democratically in the place. They just want veto power and have no ideas about how to improve the park.

Received Via Email (11-15-13): I live in Noe Valley on Elizabeth Street near Noe Courts. I wasn't able to attend the most recent meeting regarding plans to renovate the park. I just wanted to drop you a line supporting the option of removing the tennis court. I heard from some neighbors that this idea was being opposed by some, so I wanted you to count one more in favor of removing the tennis court at Noe Courts park.

Received Via Email (11-23-13): I'm on the [] block of Douglass, right near Noe Courts, and would like to add my comments – I was unable to attend the Nov 13 community meeting.

First of all, I appreciate the R&P outreach efforts. And these plans http://sfrecpark.org/wp-content/uploads/NOECommunity-Mtg-4_-PP.pdf are well thought out. I am looking forward to the improvements!

I've been in the neighborhood for 10+ years. Two thumbs up for the kiddie playground that was built a while back! Even though my kids were too old for it, it is a great addition and gets enormous use. I'm a dog owner but I think the current off-leash area is gross. A big mucky poopy lawn, completely people-unfriendly. I support strictly limiting dog areas in the park or even elimination. It is a tiny park in a big family neighborhood and should primarily serve PEOPLE.

Over the years, I have seen that the tennis court is usually empty. Even when in use – only two people are using it. It is a big chunk of special purpose space.

Option C looks great to me. Mostly, I'd like to see more general-purpose, people-friendly space!

IN OPPOSITION

Received Via Email (11-20-13): I am writing to express my strong support for Option D to preserve the tennis court. I am an urban planner, and was unable to attend the meeting about the Noe Courts on Nov 13th due to a Planning Commission meeting I had to attend in the East Bay, but want to express my written support for retention of the tennis court in the park plan. I do not think my neighborhood should lose one of the few recreational opportunities that can be shared by children and adults alike. As a dog owner, there are many locations we can take our dogs in Noe Valley, and we do not need another one -- which is what I believe will happen to the expanded lawn area. However, recreational resources for adults, such as the tennis court, are few in the neighborhood. This court has the added benefit of being a resource that can be enjoyed by children and teens as well. Please protect the Noe tennis court in the park plan.

Received Via Email (11-19-13): I attended the meeting last Wednesday. I came to it very discouraged as it looked like the tennis court removal was a done deal. Then the meeting progressed, many comments were made in favor of keeping the court and the straw vote was taken. The overwhelming majority of those wanting the park to stay the way it is, with both tennis and basketball courts -- only updated and improved -- was inspiring. Now I understand that Scott Weiner does not consider the vote for Option D a winner. Instead he compiles all votes for options A, B, and C together versus votes for option D. Where is the democracy in that scenario....? Why are Park and Rec and Scott Weiner not hearing what people want? Although that tennis court has not been resurfaced in over 20 years and sports a large crack up its center, that court is a valued community resource that helps to foster a healthy lifestyle for kids, adults and -- most importantly -- seniors!. Users of the court have been waiting years for repairs, and the USTA has already agreed to contribute 20% of the cost of resurfacing it. Do we really want this park to go to the dogs?

Received Via Email (11-15-13): And thank you for listening to my concern. I am a Noe Valley resident. I have lived here on and off for years. When I lived elsewhere in the city, my kids went to school here, and now I teach here. This neighborhood NEEDS TO EMBRACE diversity more whole heartedly, and demonstrate the tolerance was that at its core from the early days. In this instance I am speaking of the integration of dog owners and tennis players! **Keep The Noe Courts. Keep them** out of respect of choice. Some people prefer hitting a ball back and forth over playing fetch with one. **Keep them** out of respect for our elders. The public courts in this city were hard won. A generation of sports enthusiasts fought to democratize tennis. It has made a difference. **Keep them** as a public health action. Public athleticism is rare and it is vital to our individual and societal health. **Keep Noe Courts.** Fix up the dog park part of the park for dogs. Expand into half of the basketball park is sensible. Retain some grass for human to human catch and the like. But please don't be bullied by dog owners "who vote". **We all vote. And some of us also play tennis!!!**

Received Via Email (11-13-13): Though I am unable to attend tonight's community meeting about the fate of the tennis court at 24th & Douglass, I would like to express my objection to the proposed removal of the tennis court.

I've enjoyed using the court with my daughters to teach them tennis and I believe it helps make the area more appealing for recreation. It's particularly helpful to have a fenced-in court for tennis because people often run their dogs in the grassy area, which can intimidate children.

I would far prefer to see the court improved than dismantled, because it's a significant neighborhood asset.

Thank you for your consideration.

Received Via Email (11-13-13): We are unable to attend the meeting tonight regarding Noe Courts so we wanted to email you regarding the tennis court. We are Noe Valley residents with two children and wanted to let you know that we do not want the tennis court removed from Noe Courts.

We love playing tennis there with our children (ages 7 and 9). We do not think adding more grass by removing the tennis courts is a good use of the space. We see many other families with children playing tennis there as well and believe it would be a loss to our community if the court is removed. The tennis court should be retained and repaired and upgraded for the many families and neighbors who use it frequently.

Thank you for your help with this matter.

Received Via Email (11-21-13): Please count my vote for option D which Scott suggested at the meeting. I really want the tennis court to stay and plan D is the best for the children without hurting the dog areas. It also makes the best use of the money! Thank you for supporting option D!

Received Via Email (11-21-13): I strongly support Plan D, keeping the current configuration and keeping the tennis courts. And limiting or eliminating dogs.

Received Via Email (11-18-13): I live at [] Jersey (near Douglass) and was unable to attend the recent meeting Nov 8, but was at the previous. From a brief discussion with someone who did attend, I understand that of several plans put forward, only one included the tennis court and that plan involved use of the same space for basketball. So here are my concerns:

1) Considering the discussion at the previous meeting, where many expressed an interest in both the tennis and basketball courts, I am surprised that none of the plans included adequate space for either of these activities since both would be crammed into the same small area. Taken together, a lot of people use the courts in this small park, and they will essentially be disenfranchised by all of the plans.

2) Independent of the tennis and basketball courts, it also seemed clear from the last meeting that even dog owners did not feel dogs could be confined to one section. Considering the consensus on this point by those who spoke at the meeting, I am not sure how to justify plans with adjacent 'dog' and 'people' areas and little else. Other parks may police dog use aggressively, but that has got to be quite uncommon, and seems very unlikely to work here, particularly since it has not happened yet over many years. Independent of the use of courts for tennis and basketball, their availability provides one space that is free of dogs, and many currently use this for small children learning to ride a bike, play soccer and baseball. How can we justify severely limiting so many of these activities, particularly when several nearby parks have been made over specifically for use by dogs?

In more general terms, I think most of us assume that any renovation to the Noe Courts will be an improvement. For the most part, they are poorly maintained and renovation could be great. However, it is also important to keep in mind that some of these plans will have drastic consequences for many who currently use the park—they may simply have no reason to go. In other words, we have the real potential to make things worse for many current constituents.

Last, please remember that small children cannot simply drive to another park. It would make more sense to turn this whole park into a field where local children could go to meet their friends and play. I know that is just a dream, but can't we at least try?

Received Via Email (11-18-13): I thought last week's meeting was a very interesting. I know it is a small park with a lot of different needs. (And the elephant in the room about the off leash dogs) Maybe the tennis court will go BUT I was disappointed that when you did your presentation about the amount of courts in the area that you included the 2 Corona (Flint as the folks called it) , even hardcore urban players have given up on those courts. Supervisor Weiner has offered to "maybe" fix them but when there was some money last time, it was too expensive to make the ADA upgrades. I wonder if the money can be found now. And it was also interesting that you went by the park at different points during the day to see how it was being used but you did not note the gender and age of the users. I wonder what is the male/female ratio of basketball players versus tennis players as well as ages of them? Did you hint that there is no money to fix the tennis court at Noe Courts? Good luck with the project, it ain't easy to get anything done in SF!

Received Via Email (11-15-13): Please save the tennis court for tennis usage only at Noe Courts. I love this court and use it frequently along with friends. There is a slight slope that needs rectifying. Also, the courts on Flint St. are so run down even though that is ideal location. Almost no one uses them anymore. When can they be resurfaced? Thank you so much for your work and consideration on these projects.

Received Via Email (11-17-13): I just wanted to weigh in on this controversy over the tennis court at Noe Courts. Please please don't take out the court. Many San Franciscans belong to clubs, but many many others don't, and reducing the city, especially our beloved neighborhood, of one more court would be tragic. It's one of the few public courts beautifully sheltered from wind, a bane to a tennis player if there ever was one. Please remember that Billie Jean King, Arthur Ashe, the Williams sisters and many others got their start on public courts. If they hadn't had their neighborhood courts to play on, we'd have been deprived of these heroes. I understand that USTA will subsidize the resurfacing. Let's do it!

Received Via Email (11-20-13): We have been living right next to Noe Courts Since 1998 and have often heard it called a dog park. Over the years the number of dogs in the park has increased, and the effects are clear in the miserable condition of the lawn now. No renovation is likely to prevent the lawn from deteriorating again unless the on---leash rule is enforced. In fact, the three plans presented at the 4th planning meeting on 11/13 might well make the problem worse by adding another lawn area that dogs could use. Calling It a "people zone" won't keep canines off that area, just as the on---leash and no---dogs---allowed signs have not kept them off the fenced and gated tennis court or prevented the vast majority of owners from unleashing them. We have even seen a few in the tot playground. Given this background, we were surprised at the last meeting that the designer did not provide a revised plan for the one design that retained the tennis and basketball courts and thus would be less vulnerable to damage by dogs. Surely, the strong support for the tennis court expressed at the September meeting, and in the petitions signed by many of our neighbors, would have justified giving that design equal treatment with the other three. Its absence reinforced our feeling that the planning process from the beginning has been tilted toward removing the tennis court.

There are at least two strong reasons for changing course:

- 1) Taking the tennis court out will make a large number of the park's current users very unhappy and will deprive their children of a convenient, sheltered place to learn how to play the game.
- 2) Much as we would all like to see Noe Courts become greener, it is simply unrealistic to think that dogs can be excluded from a new lawn space without effective law enforcement. There are other considerations too. The tennis court is used for lots of activities other than tennis, mainly by kids who are older than those in the tot playground. The court only takes up about 20% of the park's total area, judging from an aerial photograph. The water seeping down from Twin Peaks when it rains makes the western side of the park wetter than the east, and in that respect replacing the asphalt with grass doesn't make much sense. Removing the tennis court or combining it with a basketball court would raise the question, "What are the city's priorities for providing citizens of both sexes and all ages with exercise opportunities in their communities?" The name "Noe Courts" would be a misnomer without the tennis court.

With these realities in mind, we support Option D.

Our earlier letters (August 8, August 20, and September 13, 2013) spell out specific reasons why our home would be jeopardized by the other plans, and we hope they will not be ignored.

Received Via Email (11-14-13): We appreciate Rec and Park work to improve Noe Courts and the professionalism of the meeting last night. However, I was very disappointed that after the last meeting and submitting of petitions that not one alternative regarding saving both courts was presented by the Dept. Only after members of the community requested the 4th proposal was it included in the voting (without a drawing or schematic on you can improve the park but save both courts) and even without a proposed schematic, it had the most votes of any the proposals. I hope the Department can see from the meeting last night, there is significant demand by the community to save the courts. Below is an email from Cliff Staton and me that we sent to Todd David per his request prior to the last meeting, which should be part of the "record". Also, I assume this along with petitions will be delivered to the Park and Rec commissioners prior to any vote. Please confirm –thank you in advance.

Proposed Noe Court Redesign Opposed by Many Noe Valley Neighbors –Not Outside Groups as reported:

The current Rec & Park proposed redesign for Noe Courts has significant problems and is opposed by many Noe Valley neighbors (not outside groups). With about an hour of solicitation, over 50 Noe Valley residents signed a petition opposing the Rec & Park proposed plan. At the last community meeting, there was a large contingent of Noe neighbors expressing strong opposition to the proposed plan that would eliminate the tennis court and significantly reduce the size of the basketball court. There likely wasn't a strong showing of neighborhood tennis players and other supporting the court space at the earlier meetings because the elimination of the tennis court and reduction of the basketball court space wasn't proposed until after the second community meeting.

We encourage neighbors to support the original redesign plan (see attached) which will save both the tennis court and basketball court areas, preserving year around space for kids and adults to play, creates a people zone for seating, improves the drainage of the grass areas and opens up the views.

Most importantly, the original redesign plan will **not divide** the neighborhood as the current proposed plan pits people who like the courts and those who want to create a "dog zone". **It is an unnecessary fight and will be destructive.**

The Proposed Plan is Not Practical. It removes the most utilized parts of the park- the courts, and replaces it with a grassy "people" zone, which most likely will not be usable during winter months and eventually will be used by dogs turning into a larger dog park.

Removal of the Tennis Court and Large Basketball Court will be a Major Loss for the Neighborhood.

If one visits Noe Courts on any weekend, the court areas (the basketball and tennis courts) **are fully utilized**. Kids and people are playing basketball, soccer, baseball, chalk writing, riding bikes, tennis, etc. If the tennis court is not be used for tennis, they are filled with kids using the overflow space for other activities. In short, people use the courts year round for a wide variety of activities. Under the “proposed” plan, the highly utilized courts are removed and replaced by a small basketball court, which is way too small to handle the current usage.

The People Zone Will Most likely Not be Usable During the Rainy Season and Will Likely Become Used by Dogs and Eventually will not be Suitable or Sanitary for People Use

Under the proposed plan, the current very large basketball court area would be replaced with a new grassy area called a “people zone”. Unfortunately, this new grassy “people zone” will not be usable during the raining season as it will be either too wet or muddy and most likely, over time, will be used by dogs –making it eventually unfit for kids and people to use safely or sanitarily. While the proposed plan envisions a separate “leashed” dog area, it is a relatively small space (and clearly will be an off leash space). At many other SF parks with even larger separate off leash dog areas (i.e., Haas and Corona Hts park), experience has shown that dog owners will not keep the dogs in the “dog space” and eventually, experience shows that the dogs will be in all parts of the park. One should expect that even during the rainy season, dog owners will want to let their dogs use the dry basketball court area to avoid getting their dogs muddy. In short, over time, the “people zone” will fade away and would no longer be a suitable place for kids and adults to play, turning it eventually to a larger dog area.

Will Rec & Park really Maintain the Grassy Areas?

For the 13+ years that we have lived near Noe Courts, the grass areas has never been properly maintained –it generally is a muddy mess. With the dog use, it is not a sanitary place for people to use for any activity. (Rec & Park can’t maintain the court spaces (which is why many tennis players complain about the condition of the tennis court)). Under the proposed plan, Noe Courts will require significant amount of more maintenance. Will Rec & Park devote more resources to maintain the park? For how long? It is a big ask to give up a needed space for a promise to maintain a park that the Rec & Park has never properly maintained in the past. Prudent decision making would be to follow the path which requires the least from a department that is routinely underfunded and which has many bigger parks and priorities.

Neighborhood Tennis Courts

The proposed plan removes a neighborhood tennis court forcing families to go across market street to Corona Hts or up to Christopher Field or Upper Douglas Park (across busy Clipper Street). Many parents prefer their kids to be able to walk to the neighbor courts versus traveling outside the neighborhood or across busy streets. That’s why we have neighborhood courts. Proponents of the proposed plan indicate the courts are not used as much for tennis (as only 4 people play at a time) miss the fact that the courts are sorely need of resurfacing (which would increase usage) as well as serve as very important overflow space for kids to play when the basketball court is overflowing with people. We need the tennis court space for these purposes and to avoid a child being hit as they cross a busy street like Market or Clipper.

Received Via Email (12-30-13): The current park at 24th and Douglass serves the entire community, providing recreation for children as well as adults who own dogs and play basketball as well as tennis. As a nearby resident (I live at and own [] Hoffman Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94114) and frequent user of the park, I am writing you in support of:

- 1) Maintaining the current park amenities, especially the tennis court and children’s playground; and
- 2) Improving the condition of those amenities, specifically the tennis court.

The Noe Valley Voice article titled “Noe Courts Designs: No Grand Slam for the City Planners” in the December 2013/January 2014 noted the City held a public meeting to review potential plans for the

park on 13 November 2013, which I was unaware of before reading the article. Please accept this letter as a 'vote' in favor of keeping the park layout as it exists, while improving its amenities.

Received Via Email (11-18-13): I wanted to drop a quick line re Noe Courts as was not able to attend the last meeting but attended the prior meeting. As a resident of Eureka Street only about 2 blocks from Noe Courts, we have been long time users of it with our kids and our dog. Fixing it up and undertaking changes is absolutely the right thing to do. An ADA ramp, additional seating, refurbished bathrooms and low walls to better divide the space are all great design ideas. Likewise, fixing up landscaping and attacking the major problem of drainage there are also laudable efforts.

However, 2 of the 3 proposals which entail removal of large parts of the tennis and basketball courts really does not take into account how the park is actually used. Noe Courts is never going to be a green oasis with people lounging around on a sunny day. It's just not. In a very short period of time the dogs will have again torn apart the grass as it cannot be (and just won't) be policed when most dog owners are there in the mornings and evenings. Only a dedicated off leash dog area like many other parks would prevent this. And that appears to not be in the cards.

Likewise, many people use the existing courts (it is called "Noe Courts" after all - plural, not singular) for sports, recreation and much of that dog activity (which will now migrate to the increased grass space making the actual wear and tear on the grass worse than it is currently). Seeing tennis go, having a smaller basketball court and a new and larger mudpit for dogs is not recommended. Resurfacing the area and reconfiguring/refurbishing/relandscaping would make a world of difference instead.

Thanks for your consideration and I appreciate your time and all of the efforts of everyone involved.

Received Via Email (11-21-13): Since the straw vote to keep or eliminate the tennis court was clearly split I am wondering what you are taking to the Commission.

It is disappointing that all your survey work was to look for reasons to remove the tennis court representing only what the "Friends of Noe Valley" wanted. How many people are even members of that group? They certainly do not come close to representing the community.

How come you didn't point out how many basketball courts there are in District 8?

How come you never mentioned that there are 200 acres of legal off-leash dog areas?

Did you do a survey on how many people use the bathrooms? After all only one person at a time can use the toilet yet you are still re-building the bathrooms.

I am also shocked that you said the tennis court was in good condition. Those courts have not been renovated in 20 years and have cracks from one end to the other, and the surface is like playing on gravel. That anyone plays on them shows how desperate people are to find a court without a two hour wait.

Citing courts as far away as north of Market Street including Flint Street that hasn't been playable in 15 years is an insult to the community.

Those courts are so far from the neighborhood that you might as well include every court in the city.

It is the dog community that took over the entire park. No matter what you call the dog friendly on leash area you plan to build there will be no enforcement or any way to stop them by removing the tennis court. You will just be giving more grassy area to the dogs.

Taxing soda pop to address obesity won't work without active exercise for its citizens.

You are ignoring the dog policy of this city with your plan to create a dog area in this park.

Received Via Email (11-20-13): I appreciate your efforts on behalf of improving Noe Courts and engaging the community. The last community meeting was the first that I have been able to attend. I am a little confused from what was discussed in the last community meeting about what is included in the "record" re: written comments and what is not. So that said, I wanted to just put in writing that at the last

community meeting, more people (recall about 45) voted to keep the tennis court than voted for any other option, and even all the other options combined had a total of votes in the 50 something range. The votes were done to get a pulse of the room and there is clearly a large number of people in the Noe Valley community within close proximity to Noe Courts who very much want to keep the tennis court. Even if the community is split over this decision, it seems hard to imagine process wise how there could be a decision to remove an already existing tennis court (rather than attempt to improve) when there is not nearly consensus in the community. I understand that the earlier community meetings were comprised of people who had put effort into a new plan that prioritized greater green space so potential plan drafts were drawn up to reflect those options. But it has become very clear in subsequent meetings and through petitions that this is not the major voice of the Noe Valley community. It is also hard to image that the draft plans would have gone in that direction if the other voices had been heard earlier. Yet despite these voices expressing different views in the past 2 (out of 4) meetings, I left the last community meeting feeling that there is intent to continue to move a process/plan forward that does not reflect the current data heard from the community. This is very disappointing to me. I do hope we can figure out a way to improve Noe Courts and not remove a resource that has been enjoyed by our family (including 3 children) over 18 years.

Received Via Email (11-20-13): Unfortunately, given work commitments, we are unable to attend the meeting tonight concerning the fate of the Noe Valley park tennis court. However, we wanted to register our concern--as dog owners and parents--that the court might be replaced. The court (particularly if repaired) is a wonderful resource to the Noe Valley community, and in fact, we love that the park's facilities cater to us as tennis players, dog owners, and parents. In addition, we are concerned that, despite a straw poll in favor of Option D, Mr. Weiner said he would not regard Option D as the winner because combined votes for the other three options were larger. If elections were determined this way, all of our current public officials would be out of a job. We hope you will consider our email as two votes in favor of Option D.

Received Via Email (11-20-13): See Attachment A.

Received Via Email (11-14-13): We were unable to attend last evening's meeting at St Phillip's Church Parish Hall regarding the renovation plan for the Noe Courts, but would like to strongly register our objection to the removal of the public tennis court. We would like to keep it in the community not only for our family, but for our neighbors. It needs to be upgraded and repaired. We hope you will re-consider your original renovation plan.

Received Via Email (11-15-13): Thanks for the thoughtfulness that has gone into the Noe Courts remodel.

I want to suggest a few points for you to apply that very thoughtfulness to (sincerely - I mean it - you are thoughtful; but i fear this project is perceived as 'so far along that its too late' when the voices you heard on Weds should be given equal consideration, irrespective of where we are in the process):

1. Its clear nobody is happy with the compromise, a shared tennis and bball court.
2. The tennis court is more used and beloved than your stats indicate. I am not a statistician, but I have to think that 15 days is not statistically relevant to gauge the usage patterns. Anecdotally, the folks who spoke at the last meeting for the most part seemed to indicate the court is a) used, b) would get a lot more use if it was in even decent shape.
3. The predominant use of basketball is half-court games and shooting around. I am a player! - have played in half court games, and even the highschool kid attested to this when asked at the meeting.

4. That park is too small for a "full basketball" court - it can be halved and you'd still gain another 1,000 sq ft of grass area! That way you'd have full tennis and happy bball - without conflicting play - and you still get your people gathering area and the dogs can do whatever they please! (three people approached me and said it was a great idea)

Thanks for listening and making an informed decision that we can all be happy with as we and our families move through those life stages!

Received Via Email (11-14-13): First, I want to say that I appreciate all of the time and effort you've put in on this. It is certainly not one of the most pressing issues in the city (or even District 8), but I think you've been extraordinarily diligent and patient in working through the contentious dynamics in the neighborhood.

Second, I want to say that even though I believe it would be very short-sighted to eliminate the tennis court, I'm open to the other plans that were presented for the park.

But I would also say that a different way of framing the response at the meeting last night is that even after a very strong presentation by staff justifying the elimination of the tennis court -- complete with additional studies, data from USTA, etc -- there was still very strong support for keeping the tennis court. Perhaps not the majority in the "non-binding" vote, but very strong support for an option that staff did not even put on the table.

From a process standpoint, it feels to me like the participants who came to Meeting 1 and 2 are being given much more weight in this decision than the ones (like me) who came later in response to their proposal to eliminate the court. I can't imagine that if you had never had Meetings 1 and 2, but were coming up with a design based on the community input from Meetings 3 and 4, that it would involve elimination of the tennis court. So just as I was asking for flexibility in putting an additional option up for a vote last night, I would ask for flexibility in looking at the total input and feedback from the neighborhood.

Received Via Email (11-18-13): I'm a constituent of yours; I live at [] 24th Street in Noe Valley. I just wanted to register my preference that the tennis courts (and basketball court, for that matter), be left in place.

My daughter and I use the tennis courts and I also play tennis with a neighbor there. I know you can't have as many people enjoying the square footage there as you can with a park or playground (since tennis is usually 2 or 4 players) -- but if you used that logic, there wouldn't be tennis courts anywhere in the City. It's nice to have a selection of things to do in that park: kid's playground, basketball/tennis backboard/skating area, and of course tennis.

In an ideal world, the tennis courts would be resurfaced -- then they'd really get a lot of usage! I don't think neighbors would mind chipping in to get a fund going to help defray the costs of resurfacing.

My daughter also likes to ride her bike on the flat basketball court area.

With regards to the alternative plan, I used to live in the Duboce triangle where there was a park that was divided between kids' area and dog area, and even though there were conspicuous signs indicating that dogs should not be in the kids' area, the dogs inevitably found their way into the area reserved for kids, and would relieve themselves there. I like dogs, but they're illiterate.

Received Via Email (11-20-13): Having heard, too late, about the meeting concerning Noe courts on November 13th, I wish to now place my voice to have you retain the separate public tennis courts at Noe park, located at 24th Street and Douglass. Please register my vote for Option D.

I live directly across from said courts and have watched children, adults and senior citizens take advantage of these public facilities and to remove them would create a grave public loss. Removal of any public exercise facility would be a mistake for this community.

Thank you for your time.

Received Via Email (11-20-13): I was unable to attend the meeting about Noe Courts on November 13th, and have since heard about plans to remove the tennis courts. I am a Noe Valley resident my family uses this park everyday. Please register my vote for option D

Despite the fact that the tennis court desperately needs to be resurfaced, it is greatly valued by those who use it. My family including my 8 year old son use it regularly to keep fit. There are not enough public courts in the city as it is. Removal would be a mistake. Please record my vote for option D which preserves separate basketball and tennis courts.

Received Via Email (11-20-13): Unfortunately, I have not been able to attend the meetings regarding the plans for the improvement of Noe Courts Park .

I am now aware that there is a possibility that the tennis courts will be eliminated. This would be a disaster. Having lived across the street from the park for many years, I have not only used the tennis courts to teach my daughter to play, but have also observed many adults, parents and children, grand-parents and grand-children, as well as older kids teaching younger ones at the courts. This neighborhood resource is a wonderful asset to the families who live in this neighborhood.

Please vote for a plan that keeps the tennis court in good repair and the dogs in a fenced area so more people can enjoy the park.

November 20, 2013

To: Marvin Yee – Marvin.Yee@SFGov.org

From: 24th Street, San Francisco

cc: Laura Norman
Justine Sears
Scott Weiner, San Francisco Supervisor, District 8
Phil Ginsburg, Head of SF Recreation & Parks

Subject: Noe Courts Renovation – Comments Subsequent to 4th Public Meeting on November 13, 2013

*Attached: 1. March 2011 Petition Prior to the Renovation Plan
2. June 2011 Letter of support for Renovation Concept
3. August 19 2013 comments prior to 3rd Public Meeting*

* * * * *

Dear Mr. Yee:

Thanks once again from us as well as from our neighbors who live very close to Noe Courts. We appreciate the opportunity to submit comments in line with the 4th community meeting. We have lived in Noe Valley since the early 1990s and in our current house (6 doors west from Noe Courts on 24th Street) since 1997. We’re a married couple with an 8-year-old daughter and 11-year-old dog. Together with other neighbors who live similarly proximate to Noe Courts, we have engaged repeatedly with Mss. Sears and Norman to provide input on the Park’s plan and its use over the past three years. We have attached our prior correspondence with them and the City:

- An early 2011 petition to that requests that any plan ensures a way to deal intelligently with the off-leash dog use – many prominent Noe Valley residents signed this petition, but we are not sure if this ever was submitted to the permanent record at Rec & Park

- Our June 2011 supporting the concept plan submitted by Sears and Norman as part of the grant proposal. We viewed their proposal as a very strong step toward renovating the park and preserving its many activity uses – plus, it had the benefit of constraining the open areas prone to excessive dog use
- Our August 19 2013 letter submitted in response to the plans submitted at meeting #2 – we were looking for compromises amongst the proposed plans but were very disappointed at the removal of activities’ spaces like the tennis court

We are attaching these letters to ensure that they are part of the official stakeholder review.

We recognize that gathering public opinion is a challenge. In the case of something as personal as a neighborhood park, it is far easier to be overtaken by factions who sow divisions, than it is to arrive at a result that will foster active use by all members of the community.

Those factional divisions were on bright display during the November 13 meeting. It was discouraging to see so much interrupting, groaning and “talking over” by some meeting attendees of other attendees as they were providing their 2-minute comments. I had not been able to attend the prior 3 public meetings due to school commitments and work travel, so I don’t know if this behavior was consistent with the earlier meetings or not.

In the face of such open conflict, we applaud Scott Weiner for showing the courage to submit an alternative to the vote on the three park designs that were presented. By entering into voting an “Option D” – i.e. to leave things more or less as is, but to renovate as extensively as possible, supervisor Wiener helped diffuse the situation and facilitated the inclusion of other viewpoints. His option D won the straw vote, showing that there was by no majority support during the meeting for any one of the three plans that were reviewed at the meeting. And we suspect that if a neighborhood voting pool were distributed you would receive a similar result.

One strange lightning rod for the criticism revolved over whether Noe or non-Noe residents actually use a tennis court, but one that is currently

unplayable in any serious fashion. This argument is fairly ironic given the park's name and that at one point it had three tennis courts. Clearly the park's history has been one of active use, which feels a little lost in this planning process. Frankly it feels like a Red Herring to distract from the conflict over dog use by both Noe and non-Noe residents.

But to the issue we are most concerned about: please recognize that our fundamental criticism has nothing to do with any one of the plans, but rather about the process and how public input has been integrated – or not been. Sadly, to us it seems like the public commenting process has taken a minor role in the planning process. Indeed it is not even part of the public record – instead, the “record” consists of the notecards and meeting notes from the three prior meetings (and it's a notable exception to that rule that there are not any notes available for meeting #3). When you were asked whether the public could see comments and correspondence, you replied that it would have to make a special freedom-of-information records request. This hardly feels like a decision-making process where there has been deep and varied participation.

To be blunt: It feels that by Rec and Park never even proposing at the 4th meeting a redesign which saved both courts, we have gotten the impression that over time there has been an unbalanced process, where a favored plan of certain residents was already adopted, extremely early in the process. And further, it seemed like the meetings' input was heavily biased to the “breakout discussions” and other input at the meetings, versus integrating input provided by email, petitions and other means outside of the meetings. We would humbly submit that Francisco can do better – it should have been a fairer presentation of those who would like to take advantage of the park and its many activities.

We noted that it is challenging for many to attend these meetings. So accordingly, Rec and Park needs to make it much less of a challenge to provide for-the-record comments as a complement to the public meetings. As best we can tell, it was only for this 4th meeting – which was appended to the process after the “surprise” reaction by attendees who attended the 3rd meeting – that there has been an “open window” for commenting on the plans.

Therefore it doesn't seem surprising to us that there is now so much skepticism and disagreement about the data, the surveys and the interpretation of the record that was presented at the recent meeting. When much of the record isn't even referred to, it feels like an incomplete picture. As just one (but major) example, where were the various petitions and letters that went to the City after the 3rd meeting?

We signed multiple petitions in August and September this year that were in favor of maintaining active "hardscape" areas in the park. We have felt that by signing the petitions, it is not just about keeping a tennis court, but also to keep a critical mass of space which active adults and children can use, year-round. So we were discouraged to hear some negative comments at the meeting were about "selfish individuals from outside the neighborhood" who would come and "wave their racquet wand" and scatter others from the park. The court space is equally available for chalking, learning to bike ride, and other activities. In an area like San Francisco, these hardscape court surfaces get considerably more use by a variety of individuals for activities than do green spaces that will be subject to rainy seasons and overuse by unleashed dogs.

As stated earlier, we applaud the courage of Scott Wiener and those running the meeting for their acknowledgement of the conflict during the meeting, and at the end for their including an "Option D" that would preserve the active spaces we have already and would renovate the rest of the park consistent with either its current design or something that honors the guidelines of the 2011 concept, ***which – let's not forget – won the grant money in the first place.***

In closing, we mentioned our attached prior correspondence to the City. Our comments have been aimed at positive design goals, rather than with finding fault in the design concepts. And yes, we've been consistent with favoring a design that will encourage active uses of the park – and that simultaneously will discourage the unsanctioned "off leash dog park and run" mentality that has driven a wedge throughout the planning process.

Respectfully submitted by

Attachment #1 – March 2011 Petition to Reclaim Noe Courts

Many of us who live near Noe Courts think it needs a thorough renovation. Except for the toddler play area that was upgraded in 2008, the park has become sadly worn down, and it would greatly benefit from the kinds of redesign and landscaping that have transformed other San Francisco parks in recent years. Since the main cause of the wear and tear is heavy use by off-leash dogs, however, it would be pointless to renovate the park without enforcing the existing on-leash regulation.

Off-leash dogs tear up the grass, make a lot more noise, and leave more smelly messes behind than leashed dogs do. They tend to frighten off little kids, old folks, and others who would like to enjoy a tranquil green park. They also enter the courts, sometimes interfering with play and relieving themselves there. As it stands, the park literally discourages people from walking through, much less sitting down or playing on the grass. If the lawn, courts, and plantings were improved and maintained, they would draw in older kids, seniors and others, just as the reconstructed play area has drawn in more parents and toddlers.

Noe Courts is simply too small to accommodate large numbers of free-running dogs without driving people away or causing unpleasant clashes between neighbors. Requiring leashes, moreover, is not the same as banning dogs from the park or depriving them of open space. San Francisco does not lack places for dogs to run on their own. Of the 27 official off-leash park areas in the city, five are near Noe Courts.

Though intended to serve the needs of the whole community, Noe Courts is now commonly regarded as "the dog park," i.e., the place for dogs to run free. That view must change if the park is to become more attractive and welcoming to all.

I am signing this petition because I feel strongly that Noe Courts could be a much better place:

- It could be prettier, cleaner, friendlier, healthier and more inviting.
- With input from the community, a redesign could be developed that would meet the neighborhood's needs more broadly, including those of responsible dog owners.
- And it could combine more effectively the various court activities with the natural qualities we all expect from a good urban park.

Let's reclaim Noe Courts for the whole neighborhood and give it a renewal that would make Noe Valley and the City proud.

**Attachment #2 –June 2011 Letter of Support for Renovation Concept
submitted for Grant Application**

The "Noe Courts concept plan" recently submitted by Justine Sears and Laura Norman to Noe Valley residents is a positive step. Noe Courts is a very dilapidated urban park in desperate need of a redesign that will attract local residents; the sad fact is that the current state of the park discourages people from using it. The other sad fact is that we need to deploy scarce resources to make incremental improvements, and to create a "if we build it, they will come" environment - and thus help guide successive improvements to be made in the future.

The current concept by Ms. Sears and Ms. Norman creates new community spaces and discourages the open-run dog (illegal under the current park code) mentality that has ruled the park for over two decades. It discourages the open-run dog use by eliminating unnecessary gating and fencing, and by opening the overgrown shrubbery and non-native trees that have essentially fenced in the park on many sides. In addition, it creates community spaces, opens sight lines and makes a new attempt landscaping a space that has become blighted.

There is much to be done, and how well this concept works with future Park Bonds and other plans is an open issue. In particular, the NE corner of the park is bounded by 80+ year old walls that could probably be demolished, allowing the park to "meet the street" and opening in it a way that isn't possible at present. This "opening" was part of the genius of the Union Square redesign.

Respectfully submitted,

Attachment 2 – August 19 2013 Comments Letter submitted for the public record before the 3rd Public Meeting (which we could not attend)

To: Marvin Yee – Marvin.Yee@SFGov.org

From: 24th Street, San Francisco

cc: Laura Norman
Justine Sears

Subject: Noe Courts Renovation – Comments Prior to 3rd Public Meeting

* * * * *

Dear Mr. Yee:

We have both lived in Noe Valley for almost 20 years. Our house, which we have lived in since 1997, is less than half a block from Noe Courts. We have an 11-year-old dog and an 8-year-old daughter. With our proximity to the park we have witnessed how the park is used, and how that use and the current design prevents a wider use of the park.

Although we have not been to the two previous public meetings, we have spoken at length with a number of neighbors who did attend, and have digested a variety of viewpoints. In addition we have reviewed the detailed meeting notes. We have tried to be dispassionate, but not so much that by “seeing too many angles” we fall into the trap of taking away too much and excluding use by others.

We generally favor Plan 3, though we outline a few suggestions below to improve on the design. We chose Plan 3 over the other two because: Plan 1 attempts to fit too many distinct zones into a very small park; Plan 2 suffers from taking away too many physical activity zones, and puts a dog zone right next to a resident’s wall.

Our two suggestions for improving Plan 3 are:

1. We recommend keeping the current Tennis court and repurposing one end of it to include a basketball net – with striping on the court to accommodate One-on-One Basketball. Over the past twenty years, we have observed that basketball use has changed from team pick-up games to smaller groups who often play one-on-one.
2. Consistent with suggestions we made in our letter of support two years ago (see attachment at end of this letter), we recommend that the landscaping of the Northeast (Douglass/Elizabeth) corner be graded downward to “meet the street.” This would integrate the park more seamlessly with the surrounding sidewalks and solve the drainage problems highlighted in so many of the public comments.

Regarding point 1 above, *we respectfully disagree with conclusions made quite early in the public discussion that there is too little tennis use to merit keeping the Tennis court.* We feel that a renovation would increase the use of the court – look no further than the example set by the new Alice Marbles courts, *which did not exist before.* That park’s use is thriving.

Finally, we are happy to see that most of the designs eliminate all gates to the park. These gates serve no purpose other than to artificially create the unsanctioned “dog park” environment we have today.

No comment on the plan would be complete without acknowledging the conflict over dog use; we are dog owners but ironically “have no dog in the fight,” because we avoid the park altogether in favor of larger dog areas made available elsewhere by San Francisco.

In closing, the concept plan offered two years ago was huge step in the right direction, by defining more community spaces. The update now offered in Plan 3 continues in that direction, though as noted above we have reservations about eliminating any athletic-use space, but hopefully our suggestion to combine basketball and tennis in the same hard-court area will ameliorate that.