



London N. Breed, Mayor
Philip A. Ginsburg, General Manager

Date: December 6, 2018

To: Recreation and Park Commission
Operations Committee

Through: Phil Ginsburg, General Manager
Dana Ketcham, Director of Property Management, Permits and Reservations

From: Jackie Suen, Property Manager

Subject: McLaren Park Ropes Course

Agenda Item Wording:

Discussion and possible action to 1) authorize the Department to enter into a license and cooperation agreement for a period of up to 9 years with Outward Bound California for the public purpose of installing and operating a ropes course at McLaren Park, with terms substantially the same as the term sheet dated November 28, 2018; and 2) approve of the ropes course concept design. (Approval of this proposed action by the Commission is the Approval Action as defined by S.F. Administrative Code Chapter 31.)

Strategic Plan:

Objective 1.2: Strengthen the quality of existing Parks & Facilities

Objective 1.3: Steward and promote good park behavior

Objective 2.1: Strengthen the quality, responsiveness, and accessibility of recreation programs

Objective 2.2: Strengthen and promote the safety, health, and well-being of San Francisco's youth and seniors

Objective 2.3: Work with partners and neighborhood groups to activate parks through organized events, activities, and unstructured play

Objective 3.3: Cultivate increased philanthropic support

Objective 4.3: Increase eco-literacy of park users and park maintenance staff

Background:

The Recreation and Park Department (the "Department") has installed a ropes course at Camp Mather which has been extremely popular with camp attendees. The Department has been exploring ways to bring a similar offering to San Francisco to serve residents and to expand its growing alternative recreation program which current includes biking, water sports and skateboarding. A ropes course provides an opportunity in a natural environment for a group to learn together and challenge themselves. The installation has a low environmental impact. Several years ago the Department was approached by Outward Bound California ("OBCA") who was looking to expand its student offerings in San Francisco by offering an offsite ropes course alternative program to students. The Department and OBCA strategized to find a way to work together to meet both goals.



The Department is proposing to enter into a license and cooperation agreement with OBCA for the installation, education-based operation, and maintenance of ropes course in McLaren Park at Mansell Street and Visitacion Avenue. The ropes course will be installed and maintained by OBCA, and once installed, will be jointly operated by OBCA and the Department for a variety of programs. A shared use schedule has been negotiated and is describe below.

Background on Outward Bound and OBCA: Outward Bound was founded during World War II in 1941 to provide young British sailors with the experience, will, and skills necessary to survive at sea. This educational program was named Outward Bound because it is the nautical term for a ship leaving the harbor on a sea journey. With the expansion to the United States in the 1950s, the concept of experiential learning was expanded to include real and powerful experiences to gain self-esteem, the discovery of innate abilities, and a sense of responsibility toward others. The first courses included mountaineering, rescue training, and volunteer work in the local community.

OBCA is a not-for-profit that was launched in 2008 in San Francisco. In 2017, OBCA served over 1,000 children in San Francisco with limited resources. One day offerings are currently limited to in-school low elements, kayaking trips and park exploration. They also offer overnight trips outside San Francisco.

OBCA is dedicated to using the wilderness as a vehicle for learning, education, and growth. OBCA works with the San Francisco Unified School District, the Boys and Girls Clubs of San Francisco, and Larkin Street Youth Services on various programs for middle school and high school students ages 12 and up. More specifically, OBCA's work with Visitacion Valley Middle School includes nearly 30 programs, single day and overnight, over the last 10 years, providing programs that challenge students and develop team work and leadership skills to help them succeed in school, in their communities, and in their future careers. OBCA will believes that the proposed ropes course will enable them to easily expand the program to more students in San Francisco by having a dedicated site. Currently the only ropes course in San Francisco is at Ft. Miley in the north east part city.

The education-based programs are led by OBCA's skilled instructors with extensive training in youth development, group facilitation, and risk management. Participants are placed in situations to learn new skills, apply their learning, exercise leadership, and practice teamwork to accomplish individual and group goals. After one year of completing an OBCA program, participants report the following outcomes:

- 74% participated in community service
- 88% had stronger leadership skills
- 79% had more success at school or work
- 87% were more considerate of others
- 93% believed more in their ability to succeed

Location of the Proposed Ropes Course; Community Outreach and Discussion

Identification of Proposed Location: McLaren Park is the Department's second largest park in San Francisco and has the potential to better serve all San Franciscans. With San Francisco's growing population, there is a greater need for access to open spaces and McLaren Park is uniquely situated to serve San Francisco's burgeoning southeastern neighborhoods. A ropes course in McLaren Park will provide an opportunity in a natural environment for student groups to learn together and challenge themselves individually. The ropes course will address goals and principles of the McLaren Park Vision Plan:

- Balance neighborhood and City use while protecting natural features
- Maintain the natural landscape of McLaren Park
- Enhance McLaren Park's panoramic views
- Create and build on the diverse play opportunities in McLaren Park

The Department's Capital Division, which is working on the McLaren Park Vision Plan, met with OBCA to review possible ropes course locations. The goal was to identify a location that met the following criteria:

- Took advantage of the natural beauty of the park
- Did not interfere with other uses including areas of quiet recreation
- Was not located in a natural area or other protected area
- Had a nearby restroom
- Was easily accessible from public transportation

Based on the review, the location at Mansell and Visitacion near Wilde Overlook Tower was initially proposed (see Exhibit A). A meeting was held on June 26, 2018 with Department staff, representatives of OBCA and a ropes course design specialist to identify any issues with the proposed site. Staff attending the June meeting included park maintenance staff, arborists and natural areas specialists. During that meeting, areas that were natural areas were delineated. In addition, several dead or impaired trees were identified for removal and following the meeting were removed. Based on that meeting a preliminary design was developed to fit within the natural landscape.

Design and Installation Plan: The proposed design and installation is described in Exhibit B. There will be both high rope elements and down low elements (see Exhibits C and D). For the eight high rope elements, there will be ten free standing poles installed that will be designed to minimize ground anchors and cables. Access to the high rope elements is controlled when not in use as the poles will be bare for 15 feet and require ladders for access. The permanent down low structures are designed to blend in with the park setting and their other components will be stored when not in use. In addition to the elements, there will be two storage containers installed to hold equipment. Certain picnic tables will need to be relocated within the general area due to safety issues. There will be no impact to the sensitive natural areas and all efforts are being taken to protect the trees in the area.

Community Feedback and Discussion: On September 18, 2018 the Department held a community meeting with the McLaren Park Collaborative to review the preliminary design and proposed location. Several community members expressed concern about the identified site and questioned why other sites were not considered. The Department explained that other sites were considered, but in response to community concerns agreed to review other suggested sites and also to convene a meeting at the initial proposed site so that community members could better understand the proposal.

During September and October 2018, the Department and OBCA reviewed four alternative sites suggested by the community and presented an analysis of each of those sites and the challenges with each of them (Exhibit E). On October 22, 2018, the Department met with the community at the proposed site and discussed the decision to move forward with that site. Approximately 22 community members were present at the meeting. In addition, the Department discussed picnic tables that needed to be relocated within the general area for safety reasons and the alternative locations for the needed storage containers. Following that meeting, the Department has shared with the community those proposals (Exhibit F).

Installation and Maintenance: OBCA will be responsible for the costs to install and maintain the ropes course during the term of the agreement.

Shared Use and Cooperation Agreement

OBCA and the Department have negotiated a shared use and cooperation agreement that involves three elements:

- OBCA operated education-based programs
- OBCA operated programs offered to participants in Department programs such as after school or camps.
- Department operated programs run by Department trained staff

OBCA Operated Education-Based Programs: OBCA's education-based operation of the ropes course will be available for students, non-profit groups, and professional groups. These programs can be offered Monday through Friday from 9 am to 3 pm and three Saturdays per month from 7 am to 2 pm. 95 percent of OBCA use is anticipated to be youth or educator programs. Group size on average is 15 to 20 participants. There is one instructor for every 10 participants. There will be no more than one program offered per day.

In addition, one Saturday per month OBCA will offer a free program to the community.

OBCA Operated Programs for Department Participants: OBCA staff will also provide programs for participants in Department programs:

- Department programs may hold field trips for its summer camp and after school programs to experience the ropes course by prior arrangement. The Department will be guaranteed a minimum of:
 - 3 times per month during the school year from 3 pm to 5 pm
 - 10 sessions in the summer from 9 am to 3 pm
 - Each program will accommodate up to 50 participants
- Department or other City department staff team building events to be offered at a discounted rate
 - During the hours of 9 am to 3 pm

Department Operated Programs: The Department may operate its own programs at the site using its own staff and equipment. There will be two storage containers on site, one to accommodate each organization's equipment. The Department may operate its programs during the following times:

- 3 pm to dusk – The Department may offer after school programs, inclusion programs, etc.
- One week in July – The Department may offer a summer camp
- One week in August – The Department may offer a summer camp
- 2 pm to dusk Saturdays
- Sundays

The Department and OBCA will set the schedule for use in advance on a semi-annual basis.

Overview of the License Agreement

The Department and OBCA will finalize the negotiation of the License Agreement with terms substantially in the same form of the term sheet dated December 1, 2018 (Exhibit G).

Term

The proposed License Agreement would be for 5 years with an option to extend for 4 years.

Operational Requirements

The ropes course will be operated in compliance with all applicable rules, regulations, and codes including the Association for Challenge Course Technology and the American National Standards Institute's ANSI/ACCT 03-2016 Challenge Course and Canopy/Zip Line Tour Standards. All personnel and staff hired for the design, construction, maintenance, and use of the ropes course are required to have relevant qualifications and experience to support OBCA's obligations in the License Agreement.

Hours of Operations

OBCA's will operate the ropes course:

- Monday through Friday from 9 am to 3 pm
- Saturday from 7 am to 2 pm
- One Saturday per month from 9 am to 2 pm for a free day for the community (sign-ups will be required in advance)
- There shall be no limitation on additional hours if operation can only be during the hours that the Park is open, and the hours do not conflict with the Department's use

Department Use

The Department will have access to the ropes course:

- 3 pm to dusk – The Department may offer after school programs, inclusion programs, etc.
- One week in July – The Department may offer a summer camp
- One week in August – The Department may offer a summer camp
- Saturdays from 2 pm to 5 pm throughout the year
- Sundays from 9 am to 5 pm throughout the year

Department is responsible for providing qualified staff to oversee programming.

Department and Licensee will set schedule for use in advance on a semi-annual basis.

Rent

There will be a percentage rent of 10 percent of any fees charged users that is more than \$20 per user. Monthly reports will document the number of participants, age groups, and number of participants who paid more than \$20 per user.

Improvements and Annual Maintenance

OBCA will contract with a duly licensed and bonded contractor to construct the ropes course. OBCA shall maintain all aspects of the ropes course at all times. This includes clean up of all trash and litter on program days, performing regular maintenance, and acquiring annual certifications for operation.

OBCA is also agreeing to hold volunteer days to help beautify and improve the plantings in the area around the Wilde Tower.

Community Outreach

In addition to the Community meetings outlined above, details about the proposed agreement and site selection were posted on the McLaren Park Collaborative website.

Environmental Review

The project has been reviewed by the Planning Department (Case No. 2018-015271ENV) and was issued a Categorical Exemption under Class 3 – new construction or conversion of small structure and Class 4 – Minor Alterations to Land.

Staff Recommendation:

Department staff recommends that the Commission authorize the General Manager to negotiate and enter into on behalf of the Department a License Agreement with Outward Bound California.

Supported By:

Alyssa Jeswald, Adventure Club Coordinator for Boys and Girls Club Visitacion Valley
Chris Dale, Teacher, Visitacion Valley Middle School
Chuck Farrugia, parent and community member
Dave George, Executive Director SFUSD Risk Management
Deanine Wheeler, Assistant Scholar Success Program Manager, San Francisco Achievers
Jenny Mulholland-Beahrs, Director of California Outdoor Engagement Coalition, University of California, Berkeley
Joe Litehiser, community member
Joe Truss, Principal, Visitacion Valley Middle School
Justin Woodward, EdD, Program Manager, San Francisco Achievers
Karen Tiu, SFUSD Health and Wellness
Linda D’Avirro, community member
Linda Stark Litehiser, community member
Martha Mar, Program Director of Larkin Street Youth Services
Outward Bound California Board of Directors
Orlando Beltran, Assistant Principal, Lowell High School
Salvador Lopez-Barr, SFUSD - Student Advisory Council
Shari Balisi Manalang, Principal, Abraham Lincoln High School
Sherilyn Adams, Executive Director of Larkin Street Youth Services
Steven Currier, District 11, Seat 22, PROSAC Member
Tara Hobson, Principal, SF International High School
Valerie Ziegler, Teacher, Abraham Lincoln High School
Vanessa Carter, SFUSD Environmental Education

Opposed By:

Gina Tobar, community member

Attachments:

Exhibit A – Location of proposed ropes course
Exhibit B – Design proposal, September 2018
Exhibit C – High rope elements
Exhibit D – Down low elements
Exhibit E – Alternate site summary with map
Exhibit F – Picnic tables and storage containers with maps
Exhibit G – Draft term sheet, November 28, 2018
Exhibit H – Letters of support for the project