



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

Date: April 4, 2019

To: Recreation and Park Commission, Operations Committee

Through: Phil Ginsburg, General Manager
Lisa Bransten, Director of Partnerships

From: Nathan Tinclair, Deputy Director of Partnerships

Subject: Commemorative Bench Program Policy

Agenda Wording

Discussion and possible action to approve updates to the commemorative bench policy.

Strategic Plan

Strategy 1: Inspire Public Space: Develop more open space to address population growth in high needs areas and emerging neighborhoods.

Objective: 1.2.: Strengthen the quality of existing Parks & Facilities

Strategy 3: Inspire Investment: Through community engagement, advocacy, and partnerships, cultivate more financial resources to keep San Francisco's parks and programs accessible for all.

Objective: 3.3.: Cultivate increased philanthropic support.

Background:

This item is to approve updates to the Department's policy for management of the commemorative bench program, in partnership with the San Francisco Parks Alliance. For over forty years, the Parks Alliance and its predecessor organizations have collaborated with the Department to manage the installation of commemorative bench plaques for donors throughout the Recreation and Parks system. This program has served the dual purpose of providing a mechanism for members of the public to honor loved ones, personal events and other happenings in San Francisco's parks, while also raising philanthropic support for Department operations and the Parks Alliance. A memorial bench policy was approved by the Recreation and Parks Commission in 1994, but a comprehensive evaluation of the program had not taken place until recent years.

In 2014 the Department and the Parks Alliance undertook a thorough evaluation of bench program operations to determine whether the program was effectively fulfilling its goals, covering costs, and raising at least a modest amount of philanthropic funds.

In December 2015, the program re-launched under a pilot agreement with several key changes, outlined in more detail below. Since that time, the bench program has proven to be a big success, installing 55 plaques, and raising over \$153,000 benefitting the Department and the Parks



Alliance. Both the San Francisco Parks Alliance and Recreation and Park Department correspond with interested members of the public about the program daily and the majority of interaction we have around the program is positive.

Based on the success of this pilot, the parties now wish to update the official Department policy regarding commemorative benches, and enter into a longer-term agreement for managing this program.

Major elements of the updated policy include:

- SFPA primarily handles communication with donors, program finances including contracting and payment for bench plaque donations, ordering plaques, ordering materials for installation, managing the list of interested donors, contacting donors whose contracts have expired, maintaining donor and donor contract information.
- RPD primarily handles installation of plaques, bench maintenance, communication with SFPA on status of bench requests, developing an inventory of available bench locations, managing bench program policy.
- RPD agrees to install a baseline of 25 plaques per year, and will make reasonable effort to exceed that.
- The program will focus on the installation of plaques on existing benches for the foreseeable future.
- Bench plaques will be installed with a minimum \$6,000 donation in all locations under the program except for the Golden Gate Park Music Concourse where it will be \$10,000. Requested donation amounts may be changed annually at agreement of the parties, and at this time we anticipate increases of \$1,000 in two years, and another \$1,000 in five years from when the policy is approved
- Donor contracts have a 10 year guaranteed duration.
- Plaque installation is focused on existing park benches.
- Gross revenue from the program is managed in San Francisco Parks Alliance accounts and is split as follows: 30% to bench maintenance fund (which pays for all program material costs, as well as provides funding for materials and supplies for the Structural Maintenance Yard to maintain park benches); 35% to support RPD operations; 35% for SFPA administrative costs.

Most of the changes to this policy compared with the prior version approved in 1994 focus on defining the roles and responsibilities between the Recreation and Park Department and the Parks Alliance for management of the bench program. In order to ensure that program revenue will exceed operational costs, we are also raising the minimum donation for a bench from \$3,000 to \$6,000. Lastly we have more clearly defined the length of time that we guarantee the plaque will remain in the bench – as a 10 year period.

The Department and the Parks Alliance are excited to continue operating this important public program, which connects San Franciscans with their parks in a very personal way, while also building continued financial support for Department and Parks Alliance operations.

Financial Impact

We anticipate that the program will raise approximately \$52,000 per year to support Department operations.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Commission approve updates to the commemorative bench policy.

Supported By:

Recreation and Park Department Staff
San Francisco Parks Alliance

Opposed By:

No known opposition

Attachments:

Exhibit A: Recreation and Park Commission Memorial Bench Policy, November 1994
Exhibit B: Proposed Updated Commemorative Bench Program Policy
Exhibit C: Bench Program Agreement