



Date: MARCH 2021
From: Jonathan Katayanagi, Director
City of Lafayette
Parks, Trails & Recreation Department
500 Saint Mary's Road
Lafayette, CA 94549

Subject: HAMLIN PROPERTY TOURS & PUBLIC MEETING
Location: 3333 Hamlin Road (see Figure 1, Property Location Map)

Dear Resident:

The City purchased 20 acres of parkland located between Hamlin Road and St. Mary's Road, initially called the "Batwing" property. Acquiring the vacant property as parkland was of significant interest to the City, as it satisfies needs outlined in several City plans and surveys. The area is now called the Hamlin Nature Park. The City, under the auspices of its Parks, Trails and Recreation (PTR) Commission, has begun the process of developing a Master Plan to develop the site as a nature park with onsite trails and other amenities as decided by the master planning process. This letter provides background on the property and outlines next steps in the master planning process, including upcoming public meeting dates. The PTR Commission encourages all residents to participate in this important process in making the Hamlin Nature Park available for use by the community.



Figure 1 – Property Location Map

Background

At the September 24, 2018 Lafayette City Council meeting the Council considered a request from John Muir Land Trust (JMLT) to work jointly on an agreement pertaining to the acquisition of the approximately 20-acre “Batwing” shaped parcel at 3333 Hamlin Road in Lafayette. On January 28, 2019 City Council authorized the joint purchase of the property as parkland with the use of Parkland Acquisition funds and Measure WW Grant funding. Staff worked cooperatively with the JMLT staff to finalize the purchase by July of 2019.

Why was the Batwing considered a property of interest?

- The Lafayette General Plan set a goal of 5 acres of Parkland for every 1,000 residents. The City needed to add 44 acres to the then 91 acres to meet this goal. The Hamlin Road Property added 20 acres of needed parkland.
- The Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan further supported a need for additional parkland and specifically identifies a need for a nature-based Community Park.
- The Open Space Plan identified the Hamlin Road property as a high priority location for open space preservation.
- The Trails Master Plan and Trails Implementation Plan call for a trail on the property. A trail on the Hamlin Road property could help establish a connection between Stanley Middle School, Lafayette Elementary and Buckeye Fields.
- The Community Conversion Survey identified Open Space Preservation as the number one priority for participating residents. The survey results also suggested that residents were most willing to pay for open space preservation.

Current Status of the Property

The park is not currently open to the public. Staff has been focusing on existing maintenance issues including a small landslide and existing drainage problems. Some of the landslide and drainage repair was completed in 2019. Staff has been monitoring the park since the initial repairs and are pleased to report that the fixes appear to be working well. There is an existing landslide in the west wing of the property that underwent an initial repair, but additional Geo Technical studies are planned to assess the slide and determine if additional retention will be required. PTR Staff completed the first two year’s fire abatement on the property and remains in close contact with local fire officials. The John Muir Land Trust honored the City by creating an icon badge for Batwing Park.

Master Planning Process

The PTR Commission has appointed four Commission Members to serve as the Hamlin Nature Park (HNP) Subcommittee. The HNP Subcommittee’s objective is to develop a draft Master Plan for the nature park. The HNP Master Plan will represent the desired ultimate development of the park. The actual implementation of the plan can occur in



stages over time based on priorities and available funding. The Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan broadly defines Community Nature Park as, “A fairly large site that is primarily natural and/or agricultural land, which would be improved with trails and facilities for group or individual picnicking, and potentially a day camp for youth. Complementary facilities could include a campfire circle, an outdoor amphitheater, wildlife observation areas, native plant garden, interpretive walks and a structure for gatherings and activities sheltered from the weather.” The site has several limitations that may prevent uses such as an outdoor amphitheater and campfire circle, so the Subcommittee will work with the community to determine what features should be included in the Hamlin Nature Park. After a draft plan is developed, it will be reviewed by the full PTR Commission and then a recommendation will be forwarded to Lafayette City Council for final review. All meetings will be public meetings, and agendas and notification will be sent out in accordance with the City’s agenda notification procedures.

Items that may be discussed during the Master Planning process may include but are not limited to:

- Park Features/Amenities: The City typically only maintains dirt trails (the Lafayette-Moraga Trail is an East Bay Regional Park District trail and the Lafayette Reservoir trails are under the auspice of the East Bay Municipal Utilities District). Standard features that might be found in a nature park include dirt trails, educational/directional signage, native plants, trash receptacles, dog waste bag stations and gates. JMLT Acalanes Ridge (23 acres at the end of Peaceful Lane) and the north end of Lafayette Community Park could be considered a comparator for a nature area with walkable dirt trails.
- Trail Location: Trail locations will be discussed during the Master Planning process. The plan will establish the basic trail locations, but adjustments may be made as the property naturally changes over time. These types of adjustments typically occur if there is a washout or if users request adjustments. The public will have the opportunity to comment on trail locations at the various meetings throughout the Master Planning process.
- Access: The property has a few connections to public right of way and connections to private roads. Those connections will be discussed during the Master Planning process. Connection on private roads can be established if the private owners are interested in granting Trail Easements to the City. There are many benefits to granting such an easement (the informational Trail Easement Tri-Fold can be found on the City’s website at www.LoveLafayette.org/trails)
- Park Rules: The Subcommittee will review current park related City Municipal Code sections and make any necessary policy recommendations that may apply to the nature park.
- Parking: The Subcommittee will review how parking will be handled for the site. The City has a goal of creating walkable park spaces for neighborhoods. The City is fortunate to have several walkable connections to nature throughout town including Briones, the Reservoir, Silver Springs Loop, Walter Costa Trail, Lafayette Moraga Trail, Hidden Oaks Trail, Acalanes Ridge, Community Park and now Hamlin Nature Park can be considered an opportunity for the surrounding neighborhood.
- Dogs and the dog leash policy: Lafayette City Parks require dogs to be on leash at all times. East Bay Regional Parks and JMLT Parks allow dogs to be under voice command

when they are a designated distance away from park entrances. This will be discussed through the Master Planning process.

- Park Name: Hamlin Nature Park is Lafayette's a working title for the Park. John Muir Land Trust has adopted "Batwing" Park as a working title for the property. The final name can be discussed as part of the process.

Process and Public Outreach Planning Meeting

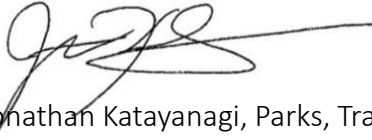
At their first meeting on February 19, 2020, the HNP Subcommittee discussed the master planning process and public outreach. Specific features were not discussed as the Subcommittee wants to fully engage the public before beginning that discussion. At the meeting, the Subcommittee decided that a consultant be hired to assist with developing the master plan, but that community outreach was needed first. The Subcommittee was prepared to begin this process in March of 2020 but had to put it on hold due to COVID complications. The Subcommittee has restarted their work in 2021 with public meetings on Zoom. They have developed a process that will allow them to continue to move forward with COVID safe self-guided tours of the property, and public meetings over Zoom (if you need free one-on-one Zoom assistance to learn how to use Zoom, please contact seniors@LoveLafayette.org or call 925-284-5050). The following steps will be taken to kick off the process:

1. Begin the environmental work needed for the site. Staff is seeking proposals for portions of this work.
2. Offer self-guided property tours. The Subcommittee wants the public to be able to make informed suggestions for park features. The site is not currently opened to the public, so City Staff will be working to coordinate timing and parking for the public tour of the nearly 20-acre site between Sweet Drive and St. Mary's Road. The tours will be allowed between **March 20, 2021 and April 5, 2021**. Participants will need to sign a waiver and read full details at www.LoveLafayette.org/HamlinNaturePark. If you are uncomfortable with the self-guided tour the Subcommittee will make efforts to accommodate those that need a socially distant, guided tour of the site. Please e-mail ace@LoveLafayette.org to request a guided tour (limited availability).
3. Collect feedback via the Hamlin Comment Form posted at www.LoveLafayette.org/HamlinNaturePark
4. Hold a public meeting to gather comments and discuss the specific features that might be included in the park. The Subcommittee will start to build a scope for a consultant that will be hired to draft a master plan. That meeting is scheduled for **Wednesday, April 7th at 7 pm**, on Zoom. Agenda and link will be posted on the City website and sent out through e-notification. Written comments should be submitted to the online comment form or may be sent in to ace@LoveLafayette.org anytime between now and that meeting date. Please include "Batwing" or "Hamlin Nature Park" in your email subject.
5. After the scope of work for the consultant is developed, Staff will send out a request for consultant proposals to develop a draft plan. Once a draft plan is prepared, it will be reviewed by the Hamlin Nature Park Subcommittee through a public meeting process. The final steps in the process are reviews and approvals by the full PTR Commission, any other Commissions that may need to participate in the process, such as the Planning Commission, and then final review by the City Council. The public will have the opportunity to send in comments and attend meetings at every step of the plan development.

The HNP Subcommittee strongly encourages all interested residents to provide input regarding the Master Plan for the Hamlin Nature Park. Staff maintains an email distribution list comprised of residents that have expressed interest in the park. If you would like to join that list, please email ace@LoveLafayette.org. All meetings will be posted to the City website, and you can follow PPTR Commission meeting agendas, including those for the HNP Subcommittee, by subscribing to them at www.LoveLafayette.org/city-hall/e-notification.

Please send your written comments or questions to Parks, Trails & Recreation Director, Jonathan Katayanagi, at the address shown above or email to ace@LoveLafayette.org or jkatayanagi@LoveLafayette.org. I am also happy to answer any questions over the phone at (925) 284-2232.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jonathan Katayanagi', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jonathan Katayanagi, Parks, Trails & Recreation Director
City of Lafayette