

Here Is Your AVENUES Newsletter!

Playground Closure May Be Permanent!

We are currently faced with the possibility of permanently shutting our Playground at Edison and Fair Oaks. Created in 2001 by FOBA and maintained by volunteers, this little park is a true jewel of our neighborhood and a great perk of living here. Yet, its continued existence is now threatened by insufficient community support.

Since FOBA's founding, our parks (including the Pocket Park at Bay and 18th) have relied on community participation as well as grants from the County to stay open. Many enthusiastic neighbors worked hard to create and maintain these parks over the years. But all neighborhoods see change. New families move in while others move out. Today few are aware of just how precarious the status of our parks actually is. - *Continued on Page 1*

How Can We Reopen Our Playground?

Our neighborhood Playground closed in March due to COVID. Since then, knowledge of what's risky and what's safe has increased. Recently the State issued guidelines for re-opening parks. Ours is not a government-operated recreational facility, so these guidelines are not aimed at us. Still, from a public-health perspective, we see them as a green light to move forward with caution. This is great news.

However, before we can responsibly re-open, FOBA must meet participation and financial goals that will allow us to address other challenges we currently face. Our most urgent need is for new volunteers.

Coinciding with COVID closures we learned the County would no longer offer support to our parks. That means to ensure financial survival we must raise funds. And to take that on we need people. But there is more. - *Continued on Page 2*



AVENUES



**Newsletter of the Fair Oaks Beautification Association (FOBA)
an all-volunteer, non-profit 501(c)3 organization**

FOBA Playground Closure May Be Permanent!

Continued from page 4

In addition to the current closure, a pre-pandemic about-face by San Mateo County on promised financial and operational support has put our Playground's future in jeopardy.

How We Got Here

Between 2000 and 2013, dedicated, energetic neighbors pulled together under the umbrella of FOBA to fund and build our parks. The County assisted with grants that supplemented our fundraising for several years. Over time, it became more challenging to raise funds for the parks' rising operating costs. In 2019, the County promised a much-welcomed additional grant of \$15,000 per year.

Then, partly in recognition that our parks are among the few in North Fair Oaks, County representatives went further and offered to simply take over park operation and management. This would free FOBA volunteers to put more energy into community events. The FOBA board of directors agreed. It would be a win for our entire neighborhood as we would no longer have to worry about paying bills, aging play equipment, and liability.

But shortly before COVID struck, the County rescinded its offer. After months of deliberation, they realized how complicated it is to manage our small parks on the SFPUC Hetch-Hetchy right-of-way land. (SF Public Utilities Commission owns most of the land underlying our parks.)

To make matters worse, the County also reneged on their previous commitment to provide the grant money we needed to sustain and keep FOBA's neighborhood parks viable.

As the pandemic hit and the community was shutting down, FOBA dropped off the County's priority list. (Note: FOBA has had an outstanding working relationship with San Mateo County for almost three decades, but this has to be said: They dropped the ball on this one.)

Your Neighborhood Needs You

If this newsletter was mailed to your home, you are part of the FOBA family, part of our neighborhood. So you may have seen past appeals to get involved. With each newsletter we ask for your support. Now we are at a crossroads. Hit by the pandemic on top of the County backing away from support, we may be forced to close the parks we worked so hard to build.

Perhaps you've taken kids to the Playground to play on the swings or in the sand. Maybe you've been part of FOBA-sponsored Playground events, or fundraising. You could have participated in getting our Playground built. Many of us have contributed in small ways. Now we are counting on you more than ever.

We've heard a lot of good ideas for how we might raise funds or improve the neighborhood. But without you and your neighbors showing up, there is no one to make it happen.

So if you love our parks, find them pleasant to pass by, or enjoy them as a place for recreation and relaxation, please consider joining the team for FOBA. It takes just a few hours each month, and the more of us there are, the more fun it can be.

If you want to see our parks open instead of reverting to weed lots, please check the rest of this newsletter for ways you can contribute.

FOBA Meetings

2nd Monday of the month
6:30-8:00 pm,
Riekes Center, 3455 Edison Way
(Meetings are currently virtual)
All are welcome to attend

Contact us

FOBA
PO Box 4001
Menlo Park, CA 94026-4001

Website www.fobaneighbors.org

Email info@fobaneighbors.org

Facebook

www.facebook.com/foba.neighbors

FOBA Board

- Laura Caplan
- Steve Loew
- Art McClish
- Jon Mosby
- Mark Reden

Playground Coordinator

Mark & Marlayna Reden

Pocket Park Coordinator

Jon & Carolyn Mosby

FOBA purpose

*To bring people together and
enhance our neighborhood*

Trash on the Street? Make a Clean-Up Call

The "Report It! SMC" mobile app lets you report illegal dumping and graffiti when you see it in the neighborhood. Help keep our streets, sidewalks and parks clean. Use your phone to take photos of problem areas and submit them. Reports go directly to the County departments that can address them.

For more information or to download the app, go to www.nfoforward.org/projects/report-it-smc or search the Apple app store or Google play.

How Can We Reopen Our Playground?

Continued from page 4

How You Can Contribute

As an all-volunteer non-profit organization, FOBA is required to have a board of directors. (We meet once a month, currently by Zoom.) If we don't have enough people on the board, FOBA can't move forward and can't continue to operate our parks. So the most important way to contribute is to join us at our meetings. Especially welcome are parents whose children use the Playground—people who can take on tasks of fundraising, playground management, outreach, and event coordination. FOBA also offers support to those with good ideas who want to spearhead new neighborhood projects.

We are strongest when many neighbors participate—in any way we can. That might mean you become an "adopt-a-month" playground monitor, pick up trash, report unsafe activity in the parks, pitch in at events, or donate a few dollars. Here is how you can help open our Playground and keep FOBA parks operating.

Volunteer Your Time

If you would like to see the Playground re-open, let us hear from you. Check our list: *Volunteer Opportunities Await You*, on page 3 for specifics. We can also always use help with volunteer recruitment and coordination. In the past, neighbors have worked together with FOBA to plant street trees, care for plantings in the chicanes, advocate for street improvement, increase neighborhood safety, and more. What we have in common is caring about our neighborhood and our neighbors. Many FOBA responsibilities are ideally shared, making for less work and more community camaraderie.



Donate

FOBA's cost to maintain both our Playground and Pocket Park runs up to \$25,000 per year. In order to reopen the Playground we need to raise \$10,000. Donations of any size are appreciated, helpful, and tax-deductible. FOBA is a non-profit, 501(c)3 organization. We try to make it easy, so there are several ways to donate.

Donate via

- Paypal - treasurer@fobaneighbors.org
- Credit card - on our website at www.FOBAnighbors.org
- US Mail - FOBA, P.O. Box 4001, Menlo Park, CA 94026-4001

FOBA Volunteer Opportunities Await You!

Here are descriptions of key FOBA roles and estimated time commitments.

FOBA Board Member

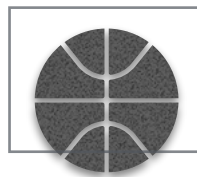
- 3 - 4 hours per month, (monthly board meetings are 90 min, currently virtual)
- Learn the issues; contribute ideas; collaborate on problem-solving and decision-making.
- Most but not all board members also take on tasks such as event organizing, fundraising, park management, or driving new projects.

Playground Coordinator

- 4 - 6 hours per month
- Act as go-to person for Playground issues.
- Recruit and coordinate volunteers for grounds upkeep (e.g., “Adopt-a-Month”).
- Oversee annual clean-up day (schedule volunteers, order materials, etc.).
- Communicate with maintenance crew.
- Attend monthly meetings to keep FOBA board apprised of Playground developments.

Outreach/Social-Media Coordinator

- 4 - 6 hours per month
- Update/maintain FOBA’s website.
- Devise and implement social media strategy.
- Coordinate newsletter publication: scheduling, article generation, distribution.
- Attend monthly board meetings to keep informed of neighborhood issues/ topics.



Basketball Court Open

Observe Safety Guidelines

FOBA has opened the Edison Avenue gate to the basketball court at the Playground. We ask all who use this space to respect the current closure of the main Playground. We also request you follow these steps, adapted from the California State Department of Public Health recommendations for outdoor recreational spaces.

- Wear a mask - Everyone 2 years and older should wear a face covering.
- Maintain distance - Keep physical distance of 6 feet between those from different households.
- No food or drink - Don't eat or drink, to ensure masks are worn.
- Wash hands - Wash and sanitize hands before and after visit. Remember to bring your own sanitizer wipes! We do not sanitize the equipment.
- Plan ahead - Plan visits at different times to avoid too many people.
- Know when to stay home - Avoid coming when others are present if you have medical risk factors.
- Share the space - Limit your visit to 30 minutes to avoid crowding and let others use the space.