

August 25, 2011

Mayor Lee Leffingwell

Mayor Pro Tem Sheryl Cole

Council Members Chris Riley, Mike Martinez, Kathie Tovo, Laura Morrison, Bill Spelman

Subject: Possible closure of the Dottie Jordan Recreation Center

Dottie Jordan Programming

It has been charged by PARD that the DJRC, located in Northeast Austin east of IH 35, is underutilized and therefore continuation of its existence as a recreation center cannot be justified. In that regard, please note the following:

- Any perceived underutilization can be traced to the lack of adequate personnel (ratio of personnel to participants determined by PARD) assigned to DJRC by PARD, preventing recruitment efforts in the community for more and larger programs and resulting in reduced programs and attendance at same.
- Special events such as a Halloween Party and a Carnival, scheduled through the recreation center, never saw fruition due to last minute lack of support by PARD and/or the requirement of a \$450 fee to use the facility and grounds even though any funds produced were for the use of the DJRC.
- While the PARD web site includes many details of activities for other recreation centers throughout the city, the site devoted to the DJRC is almost non existent, very limited in information provided and therefore giving the impression that nothing of note or interest is involved at this center. This false impression is another factor in limiting activities, resulting in justification by PARD for the recommended closure.

Dottie Jordan Expenses

It has been posited by PARD that it can no longer afford the costs of operating the DJRC. In that regard, please note the following:

- Per fiscal data provided for the DJRC by PARD, the annual operating cost is listed as \$26,539.
- However, an additional \$13,187 has been added to the operating cost even though this cost is for hourly salaries for temporary employees. Logically, this additional personnel amount should be included in the COA personnel budget for the DJRC.
- This insertion of personnel costs, into the operating budget, results in total operating costs for the DJRC to be the \$39,726 listed by PARD.
- PARD data indicates this manipulation of operating costs occurs only for the Dottie Jordan recreation center.

History of Dottie Jordan Park

This park did not come into existence through the largess of the COA nor any concern for the need for a park east of IH 35 in Northeast Austin. In that regard, please note the following:

- The completely developed park, including buildings, was used as a verbal selling point by the developer in selling home sites in University Hills.
- After all lots were purchased, the developer announced the park would be replaced by an apartment complex, a PUD with the amenities available only to residents of the apartments.
- The property owners protested.
- The developer stated "if you don't like what I intend to do, sue me."
- The property owners, some 60 litigants, sued the developer; a two week jury trial ensued.
- The jury returned a unanimous verdict for the property owners based on verbal evidence.
- This was a first for the real estate industry and was so noted nation-wide.
- The then city council, all real estate involved directly or indirectly, rushed to purchase the park from the developer to prevent any additional legal action against the real estate industry resulting from the verdict in this case.
- The legal conveyance of the property from the developer to the COA states " , , , that the subject property has been conveyed to the City of Austin for park and recreational purposes only."
- The legal description of the park property specifically includes "buildings" those being the Pool House and what was then called the Club House, now known as the DJRC.

Effect of Lawsuit and Conveyance to the City of Austin

The use of the DJRC for any purpose that is not "recreational purposes only," including the repurposing of such space for office use by governmental or other business interests, or rental or lease or anything other than for recreational purposes, is in violation of the conveyance intent.

General Comments

The DJRC has existed as a city entity since 1973 when the COA obtained the park from the developer who created the park in the late 1960s. Since the COA has owned the parkland, little if any improvements have been provided by the COA.

Example: The pool house restrooms are the original restrooms. It is possible that the condition of the pool house restrooms could be another factor in the perceived loss of utilization of this park activity and could be used in the future, by PARD, as a reason to close the DJ pool.

Conversely, the UHNA and the DJPAB have been instrumental, working with grants or sweat equity, in adding a pavilion, a rail fence at the front of the park, a basketball court, and a hike and bike trail.

The DJRC is the "safety valve" for all age levels of the community. In particular, it provides safety, recreation, and education for the young community members who, without this "safety valve" will find themselves out on the streets, easy prey for less than desirable

entities and practices. And, yes, we do work closely with the APD to insure the safety of all citizens of this community.

As for requiring community members, all age levels, to travel to the Virginia Brown center for what is presently available at DJRC, the VB is located north of a major highway – 290 East – and approximately 3 miles from the UH community. There is no indication that free transportation, especially for the DJRC children, to the VB site will be available from the COA.

Finally, the UH community, aided by concerned citizens from many areas of the city, has initiated a petition drive against the DJRC closure. Given that the UHNA and the DJPAB received only a few months notice that the DJRC possibly would close, this petition drive has obtained a momentum of its own.

Example: one resident, within a few hours, obtained fifty signatures just from residents in the homeowner's immediate area. Additionally, area businesses, led by the Northeast Austin Business and Community Alliance (NEABACA) are supporting the petition drive to keep DJRC open for the good of the University Hills community and for the good of the surrounding communities.

The Dottie Jordan Park Advisory Board and the University Hills Neighborhood Association request that the City Council of Austin, Texas delete the Dottie Jordan Recreation Center from the list of potential closures as recommended by the Parks and Recreation Department.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Joan Bartz".

(Mrs.) Joan Bartz

Dottie Jordan Park Advisory Board Vice President

University Hills Neighborhood Association Vice President