



Recommendation for Action

File #: 20-2428, **Agenda Item #:** 40.

7/29/2020

Posting Language

Approve the renaming of the Metz Recreation Center to the Rodolfo "Rudy" Mendez Recreation Center.

Lead Department

Parks and Recreation Department.

Fiscal Note

Funding in the amount of \$5,000 is available in the Fiscal Year 2019-2020 Operating Budget of the Parks and Recreation Department.

Prior Council Action:

December 5, 2019 - Approved unanimously Resolution 20191205-117 directing the City Manager to initiate proceedings in accordance with Section 14-1-34 of the City Code for the re-naming of the 'Metz Recreation Center' to the 'Rodolfo 'Rudy' Mendez Recreation Center.'

For More Information:

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Council Committee, Boards and Commission Action:

June 24, 2020 - Approved by the Parks and Recreation Board on a vote of 10-0 with Vice Chair Farasat off the dais.

Additional Backup Information:

Austin City Code Section 14-1-39 identifies the process by which a park facility can be named or renamed. With the approval of Resolution 20191205-117, City Council directed the consideration of renaming the Metz Recreation Center to Rodolfo "Rudy" Mendez.

Metz Recreation Center was listed as a high priority for initial review following the Confederate Monuments Review, Resolution No. 20171005-31. In addition to identifying Metz Recreation Center as being named after Hamilton M. Metz, former captain in the Confederate Army, the presentation identified Resolution No. 20171011-05a from the Women's Commission for guidance on renaming.

Hamilton M. Metz was born in 1840 in South Carolina before moving to Austin in 1845. Metz served Austin before and after the Civil War as a firefighter. During the Civil War, he was one of an estimated 100 firefighters who volunteered to the Confederate army, becoming Captain of Company E of the 33rd Texas Cavalry. Later, Metz was elected as tax assessor for Travis County from 1879 to 1900. Metz then served the Austin school board as member and then president from 1902 until his death in 1915. Shortly after his death, Metz Elementary School was opened and named after him. Metz is buried at Oakwood Cemetery.

Rodolfo "Rudy" Mendez, born in Austin in 1944, studied dance and performing arts in New York and Spain. He also served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Chile and Costa Rica, touring with each country's national ballet company and developing performing arts curriculum and programs for youth. In 1978, he returned to Austin

and founded the Ballet East Dance Company to provide a platform for young choreographers and dancers and to develop vigorous outreach to Black and Hispanic communities in East Austin. From 1978 to 2000, Mr. Mendez worked for the Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) as a program specialist at Metz Recreation Center. In 1989, he developed the city-wide program "Dare to Dance," recognized nationally. Mr. Mendez also created the Folkloric Dance and Mentoring Program to encourage students living in East Austin to graduate from high school. Rudy Mendez died in 2019.

City Code related to the renaming of PARD facilities requires the department to "take reasonable steps to inform persons who are likely to have an interest...considering the nature and location of the facility and whether a particular community is likely to be especially interested in the process." To achieve this goal, PARD focused on the geographic area of the recreation center as well as connecting to the Metz Recreation Center's visitors and patrons. Community comments were collected online and in-person at the recreation center using a short survey tool. In addition, two community meetings were held on February 29, 2020 and March 3, 2020 where interested community members could hear a presentation to learn about the process, the two individuals and provide feedback. The survey tool had 336 respondents with 97% supporting the proposed name change with 9 respondents indicating that they did not want the facility name to change.

Strategic Outcome(s):

Cultural and Lifelong Learning.