Proposed permits would limit Mission Peak access

EDITOR:

We represent an organization committed to those using our public parks. We found our voice when the East Bay Regional Park District cut park hours by 33 percent within 900 acres of the Mission Peak Regional Preserve in 2014.

The district completed this action with very limited public input and over the protestsation of many park visitors. Over two weekends we collected 800 signatures from park visitors disturbed by this action and submitted a petition calling for a repeal to the EBRPD Board and Fremont City Council.

We were ignored by both organizations and out of frustration and angst our organization was created. We have been successful in getting sanitary conditions improved via the delivery of chemical toilets at the Ohlone College park entrance and at the Stanford Avenue entrance. We have successfully lobbied for the end of bootleg trails which cause erosion by implementing fencing, signage and waffles. We have successfully represented park visitors at many EBRPD Board of Directors and Fremont City Council meetings, and in numerous newspaper and magazine articles.

The Fremont BART station opened more than 40 years ago, and residents nearby have endured parking congestion on their streets ever since. The City of Fremont canceled a permit parking program there several years ago, due to its lack of effectiveness and the high cost of administration and policing.

Now, city officials are considering parking restrictions again, but not around the BART station. Instead, they want to restrict parking near the Stanford Avenue entrance to Mission Peak Regional Preserve. The neighborhood near the Stanford Avenue entrance has the city’s highest property values and politicians are very attentive to residents’ wishes. Last year, the local homeowners pressured the City of Fremont and EBRPD to cut park hours by 33 percent and as a result the number of park visitors fell by 25 percent.

The local residents are still pushing for more cutbacks, and the city is asking EBRPD to assist. According to an EBRPD spokeswoman, “The District currently is engaged in conversations with the City of Fremont about a possible parking permit program to address congestion surrounding Mission Peak.”

The city police would ticket cars without a permit, or with an expired registration or a missing front license plate. Residents already have a lack of space to park their vehicles as all of the homes have multi-car garages and wide driveways. On most evenings the streets are empty of cars parked in front of their garages. On most weekends only 5 percent of the homes have cars parked in front of their garages. On most evenings the streets are empty of cars parked in the street because Mission Peak Regional Preserve is closed after dusk. Most residents near the Stanford Avenue entrance don’t park on the streets, while parking near the Fremont BART station is congested both day and night.

The real estate used for street parking is expensive, and the proposed permits would limit park access and deprive taxpayers of valuable public parking spaces. The residents want to minimize access to the public park and to public parking in their neighborhood. The plan would work like Robin Hood in reverse, taking recreational access away from the public while giving access to public streets to a few wealthy residents. Taxpayers would pay for enforcement of the new parking restrictions and receive reduced park access. EBRPD visitors are currently redirected to the Ohlone College trail entrance to reduce parking congestion, but that impacts parking at the college, which has a focus on education, not providing parking for EBRPD visitors.

Neither the City of Fremont nor EBRPD have disclosed the goals, geographical boundaries or enforcement costs. According to an EBRPD spokeswomand, “A public review process would be required for the City to adopt any such program.”

The parking permit program would redirect EBRPD funds away from its mission, which is to improve access to parks especially for those least able to afford the cost of living in our communities. EBRPD and the City of Fremont should open their doors to public review of the designated parking plan. Parking restrictions stand to harm EBRPD’s reputation, and undermine voter support for future bond measures.

Mission Peak Conservancy believes the public deserves unfettered access to public parks with no parking, hiking, use or dog fees, since we already pay taxes to support both the City of Fremont and EBRPD.

Wm. Yragui
Co-founder, Mission Peak Conservancy

Night of Science attracts large, enthusiastic crowd

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corn stand were set up outside, giving away free treats for both children and adults.

Upstairs, in a conference room, a forum of Ohlone professors discussed science, technology, engineering and math with middle school students who were interested in pursuing these subjects in higher education.

The Night of Science was conceptualized and organized by Student Activities Coordinator Renee Gonzales and student Nabeel Naqui.

They “wanted to come up with an activity that would benefit the Newark/Fremont community,” Gonzales said.

ASOC President Bubba Manzo was enthusiastic about the fair and the student volunteers.

“About 12,000 fliers were printed to give out to the Fremont and Newark schools,” he said.

A middle-school student reacts as an Ohlone student demonstrates how to intubate a patient during the Night of Science on Saturday in Newark.