

 <p style="text-align: center;">Council Communication Office of the City Manager</p>	Date: September 9, 2013
	Agenda Item No. 28 Roll Call No. <u>13-1402</u> Communication No. <u>13-460</u> Submitted by: Benjamin R. Page, Park and Recreation Director

AGENDA HEADING:

Approving donation agreement between Variety – The Children’s Charity of Iowa and the City of Des Moines for a new playground at Ewing Park, 5300 Indianola Avenue, and naming the playground the Ashley Okland Star Playground.

SYNOPSIS:

Approval of a donation agreement between Variety – The Children’s Charity of Iowa and the City of Des Moines for a new playground at Ewing Park, 5300 Indianola Avenue, including naming the facility the Ashley Okland Star Playground.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The estimated value of this donation is one-half million dollars, which is the expense to purchase equipment for and construct the new playground. Under this Agreement, the City will incur the minimal expense associated with staff’s removal of an existing, aging playground and open-air shelter.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

At the August 26, 2013 City Council meeting, the Council received, filed, and referred to the City Manager a letter from Variety – The Children’s Charity of Iowa requesting consideration of the construction and naming of a new playground at Ewing Park for Ashley Okland. This project began in October 2012 when two (2) non-profit groups, Young Variety and Variety – The Children’s Charity of Iowa, approached Park and Recreation Department staff with a proposal to fund and build a new playground that would provide an opportunity for children of all abilities to be mobile and active, regardless of their physical, mental, or special-needs state. Although the City currently has diverse types of playgrounds throughout the Parks system, none of them are considered “all-inclusive” or specifically designed for all children, including those with special needs.

Since their initial proposal, Variety board members have met with Parks staff to determine the best location for this type of playground. After visiting various sites, a location in Ewing Park was determined to be the best suited; an all-inclusive regional playground was a component of the Ewing Park master plan approved by the Park and Recreation Board in 2005. The playground site selected is on McKinley Avenue and can be easily accessed from either Southeast 14th Street or Indianola Avenue. Parking, an open-air shelter, and restrooms are already available; all are connected with a handicap-accessible sidewalk.

Along with committing to fully fund the equipment purchase and construction of the new playground, Variety is requesting to name the playground the Ashley Okland Star Playground in honor of Ashley Okland, a real estate agent who was fatally shot during an open house event in West Des Moines on April 8, 2011. In response to Variety's request, staff has proceeded with completing the City's naming requirements of research into the background for a request.

Ashley Okland was actively involved in volunteer activities benefitting the City of Des Moines and the metro area. Among her commitments was Young Variety, for which she was a serving board member at the time of her passing. She was passionate about providing children with the opportunity to engage in outdoor activities. This new playground would honor her memory and provide an exceptional opportunity for children of all abilities to play together. Adding to the memorial funds donated at the time of her death, Variety and members of other organizations with which Ashley was involved will be undertaking fundraising activities including submission of grants to various agencies to raise approximately one-half million dollars to totally underwrite the expense of this important addition to the facilities offered in the City's parks.

The City's policy does allow for naming requests of facilities related to significant donations of funds and Park and Recreation staff agrees that naming the playground in honor of Ashley Okland complies with that policy. The Park and Recreation Board held a public hearing on the proposed naming, followed by action to approve a recommendation of this proposal to City Council. Staff is recommending that the new playground be constructed at Ewing Park and be named the Ashley Okland Star Playground.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTION(S):

Date: August 26, 2013

Roll Call Number: [13-1354](#)

Action: [From](#) Council Member Meyer regarding a letter received from Variety – the Children's Charity of Iowa proposing a new playground be built by Variety at Ewing Park, moved by Meyer to receive and file such proposal and refer to the City Manager and Park and Recreation Board for review and recommendation. Motion Carried 7-0.

Date: May 4, 2009

Roll Call Number: [09-0801](#)

Action: [Adoption](#) of a policy for naming/renaming of streets, facilities, park facilities and park land in the City of Des Moines. Moved by Coleman to adopt the policy as amended. Motion carried 7-0.

BOARD/COMMISSION ACTION(S):

Board: Park and Recreation Board

Date: August 27, 2013

Resolution Number: 13-063

Action: Hold public hearing and approve a recommendation that City Council name a new playground at Ewing Park, 5300 Indianola Avenue, the Ashley Oakland Star Playground.

ANTICIPATED ACTIONS AND FUTURE COMMITMENTS: NONE

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