

San Francisco Board of Supervisors committee hears pro and con arguments over future of Sharp Park Golf Course

By Paul Slavin
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A Committee of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, which met Monday, forwarded a proposed ordinance, without recommendation, to the full Board for consideration. The ordinance, if adopted, would turn over management of Sharp Park to the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA). This would force the closure of Pacifica's 80-year-old public golf course, effectively ending a long, contentious struggle over the historic seaside links. The audience at the public hearing, pretty equally divided between supporters and opponents of the measure, packed the hearing room and overflowed down the City Hall corridors.

The bill was authored by Supervisor John Avalos, who also chaired the meeting of the City Operations and Neighborhood Services Committee. The other committee members were Supervisor Sean Elsbernd and Supervisor Eric Mar.

The meeting opened with some pointed questions for Avalos from Elsbernd, who contended that the revised language of the ordinance and the haste of the proceedings, were an attempt to avoid an Environmental Impact Report and secure passage before other relevant information could be considered. He also noted that the ordinance did not stipulate that its adoption would, in fact, close the golf course as the GGNRA has publicly and repeatedly stated.

Overriding these objections, Avalos moved to the public comment portion of the hearing. Given 2 minutes apiece, speaker followed speaker, hour after hour.

Jeff Miller of the Center for Biological Diversity led off for the pro-ordinance supporters. Many of the mostly college-age supporters wore matching blue T-shirts decorated with "Restore Sharp Park" provided by the Wild Equity Institute. Anti-ordinance opponents wore stick-on paper badges proclaiming "Save Sharp Park" supplied by Courtney Conlon from the Chamber of Commerce. There were numerous interesting, intelligent comments on both sides, often from the veterans of this long campaign. Margaret Goodale, Peter Bray and Mary Keitleman, among many others, spoke in support. The speakers in opposition, to name just a few, included Mayor Mary Ann Nihart, Bo Links, Dave Duncan, Julie Lancelle and Chris Porter. And a long string of golfers, who aptly illustrated Sharp Park's cultural diversity. One pro-ordinance supporter sang his comments.

Richard Harris of the San Francisco Public Golf Alliance and Brent Plater of the Wild Equity Institute were almost the last speakers to take the floor. Their comments centered on some of the procedural irregularities involved with the bill. Supervisor Mar had left the meeting some time before, leaving only two judges for the final bout. Supervisor Avalos ruled in favor of the ordinance; Supervisor Elsbernd opposed it. Call it a draw.

The San Francisco Board of Supervisors meets Tuesday afternoon, and may vote on the ordinance then.

In related news, Judge Susan Illston on Nov. 29 denied a preliminary injunction that would have halted mowing and flood-relief pumping at Sharp

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Park. The motion was sought by a coalition of environmental groups, headed by the Wild Equity Institute, who are suing the City of San Francisco and the San Francisco Public Golf Alliance over alleged Endangered Species Act violations. The trial is set to begin next summer.



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