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**MAYOR AND COUNCIL**

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Mayor and Council  
**FROM:** Susie Byrd, City Representative, District #2  
**DATE:** July 23, 2012  
**RE:** 7/24/12 Agenda Item 13B – Back up

Dear Mayor and Council:

My expectation for how the City of El Paso Advisory Committee on PSB Land Management would conduct its business is different than what is being done. Because of this, I am bringing forward an item to clarify the Council's expectations for the process and scope of work for this working committee.

#1. Legally, advisory committees to council do not have to comply with the Texas Open Meetings Act. However, the current policy and practice of the City is that all of these meetings would be conducted in accordance with the Texas Open Meetings Act in order to give notice to the public about the meeting and the agenda and to allow the public to observe and participate. The Mayor, who is convening the committee, thought it would be more helpful if the meetings were closed to allow more frank discussions. Because this is a very important public policy discussion that has long term consequences for our community, I would prefer that the Committee's work be conducted in compliance with the Texas Open Meetings Act in order to allow the public the opportunity to observe the conversation and to allow the public an opportunity to participate in these important discussions.

#2. When the Mayor and Rep. Niland brought forward this committee concept for our consideration, it was specifically stated that council should not participate in order to allow an independent outcome free from council inputs. At that time, I said I would prefer that the City Council and the PSB just sit together to come up with a shared conclusion but I deferred to the Council's preference that the independent committee be convened and voted to support it. Rep. Niland and several members of the PSB board who are not members of the committee are playing an active role in providing feedback to the committee and advocating for their position. This seems contrary to our intent. Because of this, I wanted us to consider one of two things: 1) each of us committing that we will not participate and asking the PSB board who are not members of the committee to refrain from participation in the committee's work to comply with our original intent or 2) convene a meeting of the City Council and the PSB to discuss these issues. This is a hot topic with lots of strong opinions. I still think there is benefit to the City Council and the PSB sitting down to share our concerns and to see what conclusions we can come to together.

#3. I also wanted to get some feedback from the Mayor about whether or not the Scope of Work that we gave this committee is sufficiently clear. If it is not, we could use this agenda item to further clarify our expectations or the questions we want reviewed and answered by the committee.

Thanks for your attention and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Susie Byrd  
City Council Representative, District 2

# Central El Paso needs soccer fields, too

By Susie Byrd

GUEST COLUMNIST

Forty years ago, President Nixon signed into law a game-changing piece of legislation that improved the quality of life for millions of girls and women.

Title IX broke down the barriers to sports participation for girls and women by forcing schools receiving federal financial assistance to provide equal programming for girls' sports programming and facilities.

Before Title IX became law, only 294,000 girls nationwide competed in high-school sports.

Last year, 3.2 million girls, an increase of 980 percent, participated in high-school sports.



Byrd

The lesson that El Paso should learn from Title IX is that when you provide access to sports programming and to sports facilities, kids sign up to play in droves.

If you live in Central El Paso and you want your kids to play soccer, your kids face the same barriers to participation that girls faced before 1972. (The Central area is bounded by Executive Center on the West Side, the U.S.-Mexico border on the South Side, Fred Wilson in the Northeast and Airway on the East Side.)

There is no place to play

unless you have a car and a whole lot of time to drive.

According to the Parks Department, there are exactly two soccer fields in the Central Planning Area and none planned for the 2012 General Bond Election. I

In Central, the ratio of school-aged kids to fields is 13,604 kids for every field. Compare that to the rest of the city.

The East Side has 19 existing and planned fields (2,863 kids for every field).

The Mission Valley has 11 fields (2,240 kids per field).

The Northeast has eight fields (3,270 kids per field).

And the Northwest has 21 fields (1,274 kids per field).

The fact is that the kids in the rest of the city have five times better access to soccer

fields than Central area residents.

The soccer-field disparity creates a real barrier to participation in soccer for Central area kids. There are no active organized leagues recruiting neighborhood kids in Central.

Because my husband and I own cars and have some extra time after work, we can afford to drive 30 to 40 minutes in any direction to play organized sports.

But that is a luxury that not all Central area residents can afford, and so their kids go without soccer.

This disparity was recently exacerbated by the fact that EPISD cut the middle school soccer programs.

In fact, the only real access that some Central area kids

have to organized soccer is starting in high school.

By that time, they have a lot of catch-up to be able to compete against their peers on the West Side and on the East Side who have been playing in competitive soccer leagues since they were 5.

Recently, the City Council had a discussion about the best location for the 12-field soccer complex that is proposed in the November Bond Election.

The East Side and Mission Valley representatives won the motion on a narrow margin to have the complex placed somewhere in their area.

The argument was that since 75 percent of the soccer players were playing on the East Side, then that's where

the new complex should go.

In my mind that is comparable to someone arguing against Title IX by saying that we should only build fields or programs for boys because they are the only ones playing sports.

The East Side and Mission Valley have two advantages that Central El Paso does not have: good access to fields and competitive soccer leagues.

There is no doubt that every part of El Paso needs more fields and that the demand for fields far outstrips the supply.

But shouldn't we provide equal access first?

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*Susie Byrd is a City Council representative, soccer mom and mom who plays soccer.*