

County of Santa Clara
Parks and Recreation Department



24-5046

DATE: April 16, 2024 (Item No. {{item.number}})
TO: Board of Supervisors
FROM: Don Rocha, Director, Parks and Recreation Department
SUBJECT: Donation from the New Almaden Quicksilver County Park Association

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Consider recommendations relating to a donation from the New Almaden Quicksilver County Park Association. (LA-1)

Possible action:

- a. Adopt Resolution approving Donation Agreement with the New Almaden Quicksilver County Park Association and delegating authority to the County Executive, or designee, to make small modifications to the inventory list as appropriate which may be necessary during the transfer of ownership, following approval by County Counsel as to form and legality. Delegation of authority shall expire on December 31, 2025.
- b. Authorize President of the Board of Supervisors to forward letter of appreciation to New Almaden Quicksilver County Park Association.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

There is no impact to the County General Fund resulting from the recommended action.

The Parks and Recreation Department has adequate funding in its operational budget to address any minor expenses associated with the donation agreement.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION AND BACKGROUND

Section A2-17 of the County Ordinance Code permits the head of a County department or agency or an individual member of the Board of Supervisors (“Board”) to accept gifts of personal property, valued at less than \$10,000, on behalf of the County, but gifts exceeding that amount require formal acceptance and approval by the Board. Board Policy Manual section 7.15.1(B) further requires that any donations to the Parks and Recreation Department (“Department”) that exceed \$10,000 in value must be presented to the Board for acceptance and recognition by resolution.

The Department is requesting approval by the Board to accept a donation of historical assets from the New Almaden Quicksilver County Park Association (“NAQCPA”), and approval of a donation agreement that would allow storage of other historical assets by the County.

Accepting this donation and agreeing to store the business records and numerous photo albums inside the Almaden Quicksilver Mining Museum (the “Museum”) located within Almaden Quicksilver County Park (the “Park”) would allow this inventory to be kept together and maintained by Park Staff and NAQCPA members for research and future events. The inventory of Exhibit C to Attachment A lists items belonging to NAQCPA currently housed on site that all parties would like to remain on site and continue to belong to NAQCPA. NAQCPA has agreed to release all liability for the inventory of Exhibit C.

New Almaden Collection and the Almaden Quicksilver Mining Museum

In 1985, when Constance Perham sold her historic New Almaden collection, the Department purchased a large part of the collection, and NAQCPA purchased another large part of the collection and loaned it to the Department. Since then, both collections have been housed in the Museum, with many items on display. In the beginning years of the Museum, NAQCPA played a key role in daily administration and collection building. Between 1986 and 2008, NAQCPA accepted artifact donations from individual donors. These donations have expanded the breadth of the collection and have been incorporated into the Museum’s archival collection and mining museum displays.

Currently NAQCPA does not have a physical space to house the artifacts if their removal from the Museum were required. The lack of storage would result in a further breaking apart of the collection if it were sold off or donated to individuals. The removal of the NAQCPA collection would result in the dismantling of displays, the loss of artifacts through which the public generates connections to the historic story of New Almaden, and a downgraded visitor experience both in-person and online.

The Museum has existed for 40 years and has worked in tandem with the Department to provide a quality visitor experience, which includes hosting an annual Pioneer Day event and facilitating work projects in the Park and at the Museum. The historic items on display at the Museum bring the significant history of New Almaden’s mercury mining and hilltop communities to life for county residents as well as mining enthusiasts from around the world. Visitors from out of state and foreign countries frequently visit the Museum. Much of the archival collection is available for viewing online through the Department’s collection management system PastPerfect, allowing the public to research New Almaden mining history or family connections from the comfort of their own home.

Reason for request of Delegation of Authority

Although delegations of authority are discouraged except under certain circumstances, this delegation of authority is necessary to allow the County Executive, or his designee, to make small modifications to the inventory list as needed during the transfer of ownership, ensuring a timely transaction.

CHILD IMPACT

The recommended action will have a positive impact on children and youth through the **Every Child Successful in Learning** indicator by maintaining the displays and artifacts that are an integral part of the 3rd and 4th grade school program developed and facilitated by the Department’s Park Interpretive Program.

SENIOR IMPACT

The recommended action will have a positive impact on seniors by providing a space for senior groups to share how their experience is heightened by the presence of historic artifacts.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

The recommended action will have no/neutral sustainability implications.

CONSEQUENCES OF NEGATIVE ACTION

The Department would not accept the donation, resulting in the removal of artifacts from the premises of the Museum, breaking apart a cohesive collection and hampering the ability to complete work projects.

STEPS FOLLOWING APPROVAL

Upon processing, provide notification to Lynda Will, Parks and Recreation Department, and forward a letter of appreciation to:

New Almaden Quicksilver County Park Association
Att: President Veronic Jordan
P.O. Box 124
New Almaden, CA 95042-0124

Attachments:

- Attachment A – Resolution with Donation Agreement