

Memo

To: Commission Members
From: Alexander Khu
Date: Monday July 6, 2015
Re: July 6, 2015 Commission Meeting

Enclosed are the materials for the July 6, 2015 Commission meeting which will take place as follows:

Time: 6:00 pm
Location: 1485 Civic Court Suite 1200, Concord, CA
925-771-7300

A light dinner will be provided.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Kind Regards,

Alexander Khu, Executive Assistant
First 5 Contra Costa
1485 Civic Court
Suite 1200
Concord, CA 94520
925-771-7342 Direct
925-771-6083 Fax



COMMISSION MEETING

Agenda

Monday, July 6, 2015, 6:00 pm
1485 Civic Court, Suite 1200
Large Conference Room
Concord, CA

1.0 Call to Order and Roll Call

2.0 Public Comment

The public may comment on any item of public interest within the jurisdiction of the First 5 Contra Costa Children and Families Commission. In accordance with the Brown Act, if a member of the public addresses on an item not on the posted agenda, no response, discussion, or action on the item may occur.

3.0 Approval of Consent Calendar

Action

A Commissioner or member of the public may ask that any of the following consent items be removed from the consent calendar for consideration under item 4.

3.1 Approve the minutes from the June 1, 2015 meeting.

3.2 Approve the Contracts Docket

3.2.1 APPROVE and AUTHORIZE the Executive Director to execute a contract amendment with Counseling Options & Parent Education Support Center, Inc. to increase the payment limit by \$75,000 (from \$67,600 to \$142,600) to provide Triple P classes to parents with children ages 0-5 utilizing certified trainers with skill sets in serving the development needs of young children and their families throughout Contra Costa County. FY2015-16 budget line: Early Intervention Initiative: Mental Health Therapeutic Services (\$188,755) 100% of additional funds are from Contra Costa County Health Services.

3.2.2 APPROVE and AUTHORIZE the Executive Director to execute a contract with Better World Advertising, Inc. to develop a campaign that brands Contra Costa County's Quality Rating & Improvement System (QRIS) and promotes it to target audiences, educates parents about quality child care, including how to identify it and why it matters to children's development, and informs Contra Costa County child care providers about the QRIS program in an amount not to exceed \$150,000 for term July 7, 2015 to June 30, 2016. FY2015-16 budget line: Community Information and Engagement Initiative: Public Information (\$739,414). 100% of funds are from the Thomas J Long Foundation Help Me Grow grant.

4.0 Consider for discussion any items removed from the consent calendar.

5.0 Annual presentation of reports from the First 5 Center Community Advisory Councils

6.0 Strategic Plan Update

7.0 Executive Director's Report

8.0 Communications

1. Concord council agrees to new play structures, other upgrades at Ellis Lake, Meadow Homes parks
2. First 5 Alameda, Contra Costa awarded \$5M grant
3. Letter of Support: Children Now- Invest in Quality Early Education Funding
4. Two articles from June 26, 2015 Concord Pioneer: "Monument-area parks" and "First 5 gets grant to aid in early detection of developmental delays".

9.0 Commissioner F.Y.I. Updates

10.0 Adjourn

The First 5 Contra Costa Children and Families Commission will provide reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities planning to participate in Commission meetings who contact the Commission's offices, at least 48 hours before the meeting, at (925) 771-7300.

Any disclosable public records related to an open session item on a regular meeting agenda and distributed by the First 5 Contra Costa Children and Families Commission to a majority of members of the First 5 Contra Costa Children and Families Commission less than 96 hours prior to that meeting are available for public inspection at 1485 Civic Court, Suite 1200, Concord, CA 94520 during normal business hours.

In consideration of those who may suffer from chemical sensitivities or who may have allergic reactions to heavy scents, First 5 Contra Costa requests that staff and visitors refrain from wearing perfume, cologne, or the use of strongly scented products in the work place. We thank you for your consideration of others.



Monday July 6, 2015

Agenda Item 3.1

Approve the minutes from the June 1, 2015 meeting.



**Commission Meeting
MINUTES**

Monday, June 1, 2015, 6:00 pm
1485 Civic Court, Suite 1200
Large Conference Room
Concord, CA

1.0 Call to Order and Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at 6:07 PM by Secretary/Treasurer Gareth Ashley.

Commissioners in attendance were: Gareth Ashley, Maria Fort, John Jones, Supervisor Candace Andersen, Kathy Marsh for Joan Miller, and Wanda Session for Dr. Walker.

Alternate present was: Matt Regan.

Also present was Deputy County Counsel, Keiko Kobayashi.

Absent: PJ Shelton, Kathy Gallagher, Barbara Cappa, Belinda Lucey, Katharine Mason, Joan Miller, Mister Phillips, Toni Robertson, Supervisor Karen Mitchoff, Dr. William Walker.

2.0 Public Comment

Sharon Bernhus of Shelter Inc. announced their agency's Open House on June 3, 2015 4:30 – 6:30 PM at 1333 Willow Pass Road, Suite 206, Concord CA 94520.

3.0 Approval of Consent Calendar

Chairman Gareth Ashley removed item 3.4.26 and 3.4.27 from the consent calendar for consideration under item 4 due to anticipated recusal by John Jones.

A motion was made by John Jones and seconded by Candace Andersen to approve the remaining items on the consent calendar.

AYES: Gareth Ashley, Maria Fort, John Jones, Candace Andersen, Wanda Session for Dr. William Walker, and Kathy Marsh for Joan Miller.

NOES: None

ABSTAIN: None

Motion was **APPROVED**.

4.0 Consider for discussion any items removed from the consent calendar.

Items 3.4.26 and 3.4.27:

Commissioner John Jones read the following statement: I have an interest in Agenda items 3.4.26 through 3.4.27 because I am employed by Contra Costa Child Care Council and these items directly impact my department. I am recusing myself from these items and will be leaving the room. Please record my disclosure in the Commission's minutes. **Commissioner John Jones then left the room.**

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A motion was made by Gareth Ashley, and seconded by Wanda Session, to approve the items 3.4.26 and 3.4.27 from the consent calendar.

AYES: Gareth Ashley, Maria Fort, John Jones, Candace Andersen, Wanda Session for Dr. Walker, and Kathy Marsh for Joan Miller.

NOES: None

ABSTAIN: None

Motion was **APPROVED**.

Dr. Walker entered the meeting at this time. John Jones returned to the meeting at this time.

5.0 Consider becoming an official partner to The Raising of America campaign.

The Raising of America is a five part documentary series and public engagement campaign that explores how a strong start for all our children can lead to a healthier, safer, better-educated and more prosperous and equitable America. The video release is June 2015 on-line with the hope of airing on PBS in the near future.

The campaign is soliciting partners to joining their list of National Partners to help bring attention and awareness to the national need for early learning and family support. Sean asked the Commission to support becoming a partner to the national campaign. He would also like to organize one or more screening of the videos in Contra Costa.

Gareth Ashley asked if there were financial responsibilities involved with the partnership. Sean responded that there is no cost, only the use of the First 5 Contra Costa logo and website for the purpose of campaign. First 5 Alameda, and the First 5 Association of California are among the First 5s that had already partnered with Raising of America. Other current partners to the campaign can be found on this website: <http://raisingofamerica.org/?q=partners>

Candace Andersen made, and John Jones seconded, a motion for First 5 Contra Costa to become an official partner of The Raising of America Campaign.

AYES: Gareth Ashley, Maria Fort, John Jones, Candace Andersen, Dr. William Walker, and Kathy Marsh for Joan Miller.

NOES: None

ABSTAIN: None

Motion was **APPROVED**.

6.0 Presentation from First 5's Regional Community Groups on their work to reduce childhood obesity in Contra Costa

Program Officer Rhea Laughlin, West County Regional Group Chair Tomasa Espinoza, East County

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Regional Group Chair, Janet Costa and Priscilla Nzessi, Central County Regional Group Chair Alex Jair Chavez and Healthy and Active Before 5's Tonya Love presented the work and results so far of the First 5 Regional Groups' parks advocacy project. The overall goal for the Regional Groups is to foster and develop leadership and advocacy skills for families in West, Central and East Contra Costa neighborhoods. For several years the groups have been educating themselves about childhood obesity prevention, particularly in physical activity for children and limiting intake of sugar-sweetened beverages. In 2012, the groups started to develop their method for assessing the suitability of local parks for families with young children. Since then, the groups have assessed 75 parks in six cities. The Group members engage in data analysis, very often with city staff at their side. More recently, this spring the cities of Antioch, Concord and San Pablo, are considering writing the Regional Groups' recommendations into their capital improvement budgets for the coming year.

Matt Regan asked what the standard cost of quality play structure these days? Rhea reported that the group heard quotes ranging from \$8,000 to \$275,000.

Rhea was asked how the Regional Groups reports were received by the cities? She replied that it varied depending on the city. However, the project had invited cities to work in partnership with the community. Even in cities' that initially were skeptical of the Groups' processes and findings, staff and elected officials eventually came around to appreciating the work that local residents had done.

7.0 Presentation from the Healthy and Active Before 5 Collaborative

Emily Warming, Director of Healthy and Active Before 5, updated the Commission on the Healthy and Active Before 5 Collaborative, the goal of which is to prevent early childhood obesity in kids ages 0-5, by building partnerships and environments for healthy eating and play.

The Collaborative's policy agenda addresses three areas with clear overlap with First 5: Reduced sugary beverage consumption, improved parks and playspaces and breastfeeding accommodation.

8.0 Executive Director's Report

Sean Casey gave the following Executive Director report:

- 1) The State Budget is now in the hands of the budget conference committee to reconcile the two houses' visions of state spending. They include the varied proposals for increasing spending in early learning, from a Senate increase of \$332 million to the Assembly's recommendation of \$605 million.
- 2) The Commission will soon receive a brief survey from our state Association. The Association's communications contractor, PR and Company, has created the seven-item survey for county commissioners, to gather commissioners' knowledge about First 5's role and perception at the local level. They are hoping to have input from as many Commissioners as possible, to inform our growing communications work.
- 3) Salud America, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Research Network to Prevent Obesity Among Latino Children, has been very impressed with our Sugar Bites work, and will be on site on June 2, 2015 to interview Healthy and Active Before 5 members and others on how we produced and rolled out the campaign. We are pleased that such an influential entity is taking an interest in this work. The Sugar Bites ads are on TV, by the way; staff had seen them on several channels.
- 4) On May 27 and 28, 2015, Zero Tolerance for Domestic Violence, the RYSE Center, the Niroga Institute and First 5 Contra Costa co-sponsored the two-day Trauma Summit, looking at the impact

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of childhood trauma on adults. We heard from Jessica Richards on early brain development and simple system for assessing early childhood behavior, Derek Clark on how his childhood in foster care has affected his adult life, and Joy DeGruy on the multi-generational impact of slavery on African-Americans. Commissioner Mister Phillips attended the second day of the Summit.

- 5) Two weeks ago, the Ensuring Opportunity Campaign convened to catch up on campaign accomplishments and particularly to hear from Anat Shenker-Osorio, the communications consultant who is guiding the campaign's approach to talking about poverty. Her presentation touched on many of the values-laden terms associated with poverty – including the word poverty itself. Commissioner Wanda Session, Camilla Rand Director of Community Services Bureau, and Gayle Israel from the office of Supervisor Andersen were among the attendees.
- 6) Our auditors were in the office three weeks ago for their spring review. Their typically one-week session ended after only three days because they found our staff's preparation so comprehensive and well-organized. Kudos to Marnie, Marianne, Shawn, Lisa Johnson and everyone else who helped in that effort.
- 7) Lastly, Sean noted the e-cigarette article included in the packet under communications.

Maria Fort requested some brief highlights from the May 13, 2015 Commission Strategic Plan Retreat.

Sean reported that he felt the Commission as a whole had a high level of discourse thinking “high level” and long term and very strong strategic interests. He also informed that the staff is now constructing a plan around the ideas and will have more details by the September 2015 Commission Meeting.

Gareth Ashley reported that he felt the group was very inclusive and very open and participants were collaborative and not afraid to speak their minds. He commended the staff for being thorough and prepared with the reports.

John Jones added that this recent strategic plan retreat was focused on a five year plan as opposed to the previous one where decisions were for a more immediate projection of its needs.

10.0 Commissioner F.Y.I. Updates

Matt Regan announced that on May 21, 2015, the Bay Area Council hosted a meeting on May 21 with California Governor Brown, SF Mayor Ed Lee, Oakland Mayor Libby Schaaf and San Jose Mayor Sam Liccardo on regional solutions to the Bay Area housing supply and affordability crisis, public safety and public congestion.

He also noted that Nadine Burke Harris, Founder and CEO of Center for Youth Wellness gave a riveting talk about how traumatic childhood experiences related to poverty, family dysfunction and other causes can lead to future costly health problems and derail opportunities to participate fully in the workforce and economy.

Photos and videos of the conference can be found on the Bay Area Council Website:

<http://www.bayareacouncil.org/china/a-governor-three-mayors-and-a-secretary-of-state-walked-into-a-conference/>

11.0 Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 7:24 PM.

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Monday July 6, 2015

Agenda Item 6.0

Strategic Plan Update

DRAFT SAMPLE of one initiative for illustration only; full and complete document to be presented to Commission September, 2015

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION INITIATIVE

Goal

All children have access to high-quality, affordable child care and early learning.

Long-Term Impact

- Children enter school prepared to succeed socially, emotionally and academically.
- Early learning workforce is sufficiently educated and trained to successfully meet standards of high quality.
- Standards, policies, and funding for ensuring access to high-quality ECE are institutionalized.

Indicators of Communitywide Progress

- Percent of children birth-5 receiving high-quality early learning
- Percent of 3-4 year olds enrolled in preschool.
- Percent of children ready for school at kindergarten entry.
- Percent of 3rd grade children reading at grade-level proficiency.

Strategy 1: Support professional education and development necessary for ECE providers to meet standards of high quality

Strategic Directions

- Support education and professional development in community **colleges**, prioritizing providers serving children in highest need areas.
- Support and advocate for **local B.A. pathways** for early learning professionals.
- Provide educational and professional development **stipends** as funding allows; developing funding partnerships as possible.

Strategic Results, measured by:

Effort

- ✓ Number of early learning professionals who participate in community college advising programs

Effect

- ✓ Percent of early learning professionals who advance in their degree pathways

Strategy 2: Maintain the ECE quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) to foster ongoing improvement of early learning program quality

Strategic Directions

- Participate in **regional QRIS activities**.
- Evaluate, assess and refine **quality improvement methods and activities**.
- Support **site-level quality improvement activities** through workforce development, on-site coaching and consultation, and family engagement.
- Expand where possible quality rating and improvement system beyond county areas of highest need.

DRAFT SAMPLE of one initiative for illustration only; full and complete document to be presented to Commission September, 2015

Strategic Results, measured by:

Effort

- ✓ Number of early learning program sites participating and rated in QRIS
- ✓ Number of children attending QRIS programs

Effect

- ✓ Percent of QRIS sites rated at high quality levels
- ✓ Percent of QRIS sites with improved ratings
- ✓ Percent of children ready for school at kindergarten entry

Cross-Cutting Strategy: Engage in education, advocacy & policy to advance First 5's goals

Strategic Directions

- Advocate for **policies, funding, and systems changes** that increase the access, quality, and reimbursement rates for early care and education provided to infants, toddlers and preschoolers.
- Convene ECE leadership to promote **countywide planning and systems development**.
- With partners, update and refine the county Preschool Makes a Difference plan for universal preschool
- Explore potential for funding the Preschool Makes a Difference scholarship program

Strategic Results, measured by:

Effort

- ✓ Types of education, advocacy, and systems building activities

Effect

- ✓ Changes in ECE policies, funding streams, and/or systems



Monday July 6, 2015

Agenda Item 8.0

Communications

First 5 Alameda, Contra Costa awarded \$5M grant

By Rocio Hernandez-Zarate rhernandez-zarate@bayareanewsgroup.com

POSTED: 06/11/2015 09:08:05 PM PDT

CONCORD -- Jessica Buscho knows firsthand the importance of developmental screening for children. Three years ago, a Delta First 5 staff member observed signs of developmental delay in her son's behavior during a regular visit to the Brentwood center.

The Ages and Stages Questionnaire, a screening tool endorsed by First 5, showed Connor's development was below normal for his age group. At age 3, Connor was diagnosed with autism.

Today, after three years of developmental intervention preschool and occupational therapy, Connor's diagnosis has been lowered to sensory processing disorder. His mother is proud to announce that her 6-year-old is a kindergarten graduate.

"My husband and I credit First 5 for getting Connor to early intervention as quickly as possible because it may not have been something that we would have pursued," Buscho said. In Alameda and Contra Costa County, First 5 centers continue to advocate for child developmental screening awareness as part of its local Help Me Grow program. To help with their efforts, the Thomas J. Long Foundation awarded First 5 Alameda and Contra Costa County a \$5 million joint-grant in April.

"Our goal is that all children in both counties receive a development screen," said Janis Burger, CEO of First 5 Alameda County.

The First 5 centers plan to use the funds to launch an early screening awareness campaign and improve pediatricians' and child care providers' knowledge on the ASQ. The test looks at a child's communication, gross motor, fine motor, problem solving and personal-social skills. The test can inform pediatricians of the child's weaknesses as well as their strengths. "Many of them have not been trained on the ASQ that's becoming the industry standard," said First 5 Contra Costa County Director Sean Casey. "What we are really trying to do is catch everybody up on it."

Once the test determines the child's need, Burger said First 5's staff continues to support families by navigating them throughout the child care system and connecting them to appropriate resources.

Mark Friedman, Long Foundation CEO, has seen the impact Help Me Grow has had on families, such as Buscho's, through statistical and personal stories. He has witnessed their

lives improve through the resources the program was able to connect them with. The foundation is excited to help expand the model so that it may serve more children.

"It's extremely important to support Help Me Grow because of the increasing numbers of children who end up with a diagnosis of developmental delays or other conditions, that if they are spotted and treated early, can become much less difficult for them to deal with later in life," Friedman said. "So the early identification of children who might have problems can really help those children to live in a much more successful life."

Contact Rocio Hernandez-Zarate at 925-952-2617. Follow her at [Twitter.com/rocioldz19](https://twitter.com/rocioldz19).

Original article is found on:

http://www.contracostatimes.com/news/ci_28296104/first-5-alameda-contra-costa-awarded-5m-grant

Concord council agrees to new play structures, other upgrades at Ellis Lake, Meadow Homes parks

By Lisa P. White lwhite@bayareanewsgroup.com

POSTED: 06/10/2015 11:13:37 AM PDT



Meadow Homes Spray Park in Concord, Calif., May 3, 2014. (Dan Honda/Bay Area News Group) (Dan Honda)

CONCORD -- Responding to pressure from parents who live in the Monument Boulevard community, the City Council on Tuesday agreed to upgrade amenities at Ellis Lake and Meadow Homes parks.

Since October, a dedicated group of residents has appeared many times before the council asking city leaders to improve parks in the Monument Corridor they say are in worse condition than parks outside the area with respect to maintenance, safety, play equipment and amenities.

Their persistence paid off Tuesday during the council members' review of the 2015 fiscal year capital improvement program.

"We are lacking in parity in our parks," Councilman Dan Helix said. "These upgrades are long overdue."

In a June 1 memo to the city, residents asked for restrooms, a new toddler lot and a play structure for older children, new lighting, a barrier of stones or landscaping around the lake's perimeter, water fountains and seating at Ellis Lake, identified as their top priority.

Several speakers said drug use and other unsavory behavior has driven families away from Ellis Lake. For example, one woman said her 5-year-old son found a syringe at the park.

"We feel the park's unsafe and criminal activity makes the park unusable," said Alex Chavez, Central County Regional Group chairman.

At Meadow Homes, residents asked for a new toddler lot and play structure for older children, bleachers at the soccer field, new lighting, a paved path, bilingual signs with nonemergency police department numbers and more garbage cans.

Concord resident George Fulmore, who doesn't live in the Monument neighborhood, implored the council to improve Meadow Homes park first because the community uses it more than Ellis Lake.

But several speakers argued that Ellis Lake is underused only because people don't feel safe there. Referring to the transformation of formerly crime-ridden Baldwin Park, Police Chief Guy Swanger said, "The only way you can flip a park is to create activity."

According to the city's estimates, new restrooms at Ellis Lake would cost \$320,000; a new play structure at Meadow Homes would cost \$325,000 and expanding the playground equipment at Ellis Lake would cost \$275,000.

Council members asked staff to return on June 23 with a plan to pay for improvements at the two parks.

The funds could come from \$750,000 currently earmarked for water quality projects at city parks' ponds and from about \$360,000 in East Bay Regional Park District Measure WW bond money. Although Concord must apply in March to the park district for permission to use the bond money, City Engineer Robert Ovadia said the district tends to view playground projects favorably. In partnership with the community groups, the city staffers also may explore grant funding possibilities.

In November 2013, residents working with a collaborative team made up of Contra Costa Health Services, Monument Impact, Central County Regional Group, Healthy and Active Before 5 and First 5 Contra Costa assessed the amenities and conditions at seven parks that serve the Monument community.

Participants filled out 33 surveys ranking the parks according to maintenance, safety, play equipment, accessibility, transportation access and amenities. The three parks located outside the Monument neighborhood -- Baldwin, Concord Community and Ygnacio Valley - - received high marks. The four parks in the neighborhood -- Cambridge, Ellis Lake, Meadow Homes and Rick Seers -- received less favorable scores from residents.

Lisa P. White covers Concord and Pleasant Hill. Contact her at 925-943-8011. Follow her at [Twitter.com/lisa_p_white](https://twitter.com/lisa_p_white).

Original article is found on:

http://www.contracostatimes.com/news/ci_28289317/concord-council-agrees-to-new-play-structures-other-upgrades-at-ellis-lake-meadow-homes-parks



CHILDREN NOW

Invest in Quality Early Education Funding

Please sign on to the following letter of support

The Honorable J. Edmund
Brown
Office of the Governor
State Capitol, Suite 1173
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Invest in Quality Early Education Funding in the 2015-2016 Budget

Dear Governor Brown,

The Legislature has expressed its strong commitment to quality early care and education programs for our state's youngest learners. We urge you to prioritize early learning investments as well and sign a budget package that puts young children and families front and center.

With your leadership, California can take steps to rebuild the early care and education infrastructure needed to move families out of poverty, to make working families self-sufficient, and to provide our earliest learners with opportunities that will support greater academic achievements and lifelong well-being.

Research shows that high-quality early care and education significantly narrows the readiness gap, reduces the high school dropout rate and leads to savings from lower costs related to special education, public assistance and crime. In short, it is one of the best investments you can make to ensure the future success of our state.

Our organizations – representing key business, child care and preschool provider, early education and community groups – urge you to take this critical step toward fulfilling our responsibility to our youngest learners. We firmly believe that your actions will result in positive social, academic and economic outcomes for decades to come.

Sincerely,

[Insert list of signatories]

Thank you for signing!

REMOVE SIGNATURE

 Early Learning

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Two Monument-area parks get nod

PEGGY SPEAR
Concord Pioneer

With Concord's motto being "Where Families Come First," nowhere is that as evident as in its abundance of parks. But many local outdoor play spaces have fallen into disrepair, with residents complaining of lighting, broken play structures and other safety concerns.

After the Concord City Council heard a report earlier this spring that called for \$16.7 million of upgrades to local parks, the city told residents it is committed to providing as much support as possible to making parks a priority.

Two of those parks, Ellis Lake Park and Meadow Homes Park, will get a fresh infusion of funds if a local coalition of residents — most from the Monument area — have their way.

After members of the Central

County Regional Group packed two recent city council budget workshops, the city council asked city staff to come up with a way to pay for the improvements at the parks. According to the city's estimates, new restrooms at Ellis Lake would cost \$320,000; a new play structure at Meadow Homes would cost \$325,000 and expanding the playground equipment at Ellis Lake would cost \$275,000. Plans would also address lighting and other safety concerns.

County Regional Group packed two recent city council budget workshops, the city council asked city staff to come up with a way to pay for the improvements at the parks. According to the city's estimates, new restrooms at Ellis Lake would cost \$320,000; a new play structure at Meadow Homes would cost \$325,000 and expanding the playground equipment at Ellis Lake would cost \$275,000. Plans would also address lighting and other safety concerns.

The coalition is made up of representatives from Contra Costa Health Services, Monument Impact, Central County Regional Group, Healthy and Active Before 5 and First 5 Contra Costa. It has been meeting with community members and city representatives since Oct. 2013, and clad in bright blue t-shirts, they have made their own impact at many city council meetings promoting their own parks need assessments.

Participants filled out surveys ranking the parks according to their needs in regards to maintenance, safety, play equipment, accessibility, transportation access and amenities. Seven Parks were seen as needing the most improvements: Baldwin, Cambridge, Concord Community Park, Ellis Lake, Meadow Homes, Rick Seers and Ygnacio Valley Park. Of the seven parks, Ellis Lake and Meadow Homes received the lowest scores, and were deemed to have the most

favorable impact on the Monument community if they were improved. "Our priorities are safety, equipment, bathrooms and functional clean water fountains," says Rhea Laughlin, community engagement program officer for First 5 Contra Costa. "This has been a unique effort that is community driven, backed by robust community organizations. We found in our work that most of the Monument community would like to see improvements at Ellis Lake Park first."

Earlier this month, the coalition sent a letter to the city asking for restrooms, a new toddler lot and a play structure for older children, new lighting, a barrier of stones or landscaping around the lake's perimeter, water fountains and seating at Ellis Lake.

Concord resident George Fulmore argued that the priority should be on Meadow Homes

Park, since that is often overcrowded and needs improvements such as new playground installations. But other community members argued that it is overcrowded only because parents are worried about the safety of Ellis Lake Park.

The funds to improve the parks could come from \$750,000 already earmarked to improve water quality projects at city park ponds, as well as about \$360,000 from Measure WW, an East Bay Regional Parks bond. The city will also explore other grant possibilities with the community groups, but it is the aim of the coalition to see the improvements get started in the 2015-16 fiscal year.

"This will mean a lot to the community," said Ana Villalobos of Monument Impact. "As you know, many residents of the Monument area rely on walking because they don't have trans-

portation. To be able to walk with their children to safe park is a priority.

"We are just happy to bring the community back to the parks," she said.

In its report released early in May, Santa Clara-based Verde Designs looked at the full scope of Concord's parks' infrastructure, including fences, landscaping, asphalt paving, walkways, exterior lighting, play structures, buildings, sports fields and irrigation systems.

The bulk of the \$16.7 million — \$16.4 million — would need to go to landscaping needs, including upgrading the aged irrigation systems and to controlling gophers and other pests.

There isn't a plan, however, to secure funding for the projected \$30 million the city will need to make capital replacements in the parks over the next 20 years.

First 5 gets grant to aid in early detection of developmental delays

PEGGY SPEAR
Concord Pioneer

Children suffering from speech problems, behavioral challenges and autism will get a boost thanks to a \$5 million grant awarded to First 5 Alameda County and First 5 Contra Costa to ensure that developmental delays are identified and treated early in childhood.

The Thomas J. Long Foundation has awarded the grant to help expand Help Me Grow, a national model that promotes early detection of development delays in young children, and ensures timely access to needed services. Currently, 70 percent of developmental delays are undetected until children reach kindergarten, resulting in missed opportunities for children to receive intervention services shown to be most effective earlier in life.

"One in four young children is at risk for a developmental delay, yet current systems to identify delays are inadequate. Only 28 percent of California children receive developmental screening," said Mark Friedman, CEO of the

Thomas J. Long Foundation, about the effective method recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics to flag developmental problems early. "This grant will help more East Bay children get back on track before starting school, which down the road can reduce costs to education and health systems."

The funds will be used to train more pediatricians and childcare providers on a developmental screening tool that checks children's developmental progress. Screening will be prioritized for low-income children and those in non-English-speaking households. Funds will also be used for an awareness campaign for parents about the importance of early screening and how to access it.

"Children with moderate delays have the same challenges as children whose difficulties are more severe," said Sean Casey, Executive Director of First 5 Contra Costa. "The difference is that they don't have the access to free intervention services the state is mandated to provide. Many children then fall further behind.

With the Long Foundation grant, we'll be able to provide those children with the timely and effective services they need to improve their development."

His counterpart in Alameda County agreed. "The optimal time to detect and address concerns is in the first three years, when children's brains are still forming and are most receptive to intervention," said Janis Burger, CEO of First 5 Alameda County. "Early detection and treatment services can vastly improve developmental outcomes for children with special needs and prevent further progression of delays."

As screening services are expanded, it is anticipated that more children will be identified with moderate delays not serious to qualify for state-funded intervention services, yet still be in need of help. To fill this gap, funds will also be used to provide one-on-one and group support for those children and to teach parents how to address their child's needs.

For more information, visit www.firstfivecc.org.