

REPORT OF GENERAL MANAGER

APPROVED
MAR 15 2006

NO. 06-65

DATE March 15, 2006

BOARD OF RECREATION
and PARK COMMISSIONERS

C.D. 8

BOARD OF RECREATION AND PARK COMMISSIONERS

SUBJECT: VAN NESS RECREATION CENTER - NAMING OF THE NEW GYMNASIUM BUILDING FOR JOHNNIE L. COCHRAN, JR., AND INSTALLATION OF A MEMORIAL PLAQUE IN HIS HONOR

J. Combs	_____	J. Kolb	_____
H. Fujita	_____	F. Mok	_____
S. Huntley	_____	K. Regan	_____
B. Jensen	_____	*M. Shall	<u>MS</u>

Robert Jensen (G)
General Manager

Approved _____ Disapproved _____ Withdrawn _____

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Board:

1. Approve naming the new Van Ness Recreation Center Gymnasium building in honor of Johnnie L. Cochran, Jr.;
2. Approve the installation of the plaque, its wording, and placement inside the new gymnasium building; and,
3. Direct staff to install the appropriate signage.

SUMMARY:

Van Ness Recreation and Child Care Center is located at 5720 2nd Avenue, in the Chesterfield Square area of South Los Angeles. A new gymnasium building is under construction at the site and is scheduled to be completed by the end of April 2006. On July 18, 2005, the Department received a letter from Councilmember Bernard C. Parks requesting that the Department name the new gymnasium building in honor of Johnnie L. Cochran, Jr. Additionally, it was proposed that a memorial plaque be installed inside the building.

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Mr. Johnnie L. Cochran, Jr., died on March 29, 2005, at age 67. Mr. Cochran's legacy is a reminder to young people about the value of education and how they can maximize their opportunities through higher learning. Born in 1937, Johnnie Cochran's family moved to Los Angeles in 1949, and he grew up near Van Ness Recreation Center. Mr. Cochran graduated from Los Angeles High School, UCLA, and Loyola Law School. He earned a reputation as a skilled lawyer, police reformer and advocate for the disenfranchised during his time as Deputy City Attorney for the City of Los Angeles, Assistant District Attorney for Los Angeles County, and in private practice. He skillfully represented people of diverse backgrounds, ethnicities, and socio-economic levels. Mr. Cochran valued advocating for justice and fairness for the thousands of clients he represented over the course of his career. He gave opportunities to many attorneys and young people, encouraging education and persistence as the keys to success.

A meeting was held at the Van Ness Recreation Center on August 9, 2005 to discuss this proposal. All Park Advisory Board members and meeting attendees were in support of this proposal.

Department staff has reviewed the proposal and recommends approval of the naming and the installation of the memorial plaque on the interior wall inside the new gymnasium building, adjacent to the office and entry doors. The plaque would be approximately 24"x 36" in size and be made of bronze. The Cochran Family Trust would pay for the plaque. The plaque would contain a relief image of Mr. Cochran and would have the following verbiage:

"Johnnie L. Cochran, Jr. is a model of what you can be, and what you can do. He grew up in this neighborhood-- your neighborhood. He played on these streets as a young boy. He went to your schools. He pursued higher education; he found and seized opportunities, working hard as a City Attorney, a District Attorney and then a private attorney. During a career that spanned decades, Attorney Cochran represented thousands of clients of all ethnic and economic groups. He embraced the cause of justice and fairness for all of his clients. His personal and professional motto was "preparation, preparation, preparation."

Additionally, a sign on the exterior of the gymnasium building or a facility sign in front of the building may be installed, depending on the availability of construction contingency funds.

The Councilmember of this District and Pacific Region staff support the proposed installation of the plaque.

Staff has determined that the subject project will consist of interior alterations involving remodeling where there will be negligible or no expansion of use, and therefore, is exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Article III, Section 1, Class 1 (1) of the City CEQA Guidelines.

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FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT:

Approval of the naming will have negligible impact on the general fund, due to the Cochran Family Trust funding the costs of the memorial plaque. There will only be minor expenditures for the exterior facility sign.

Prepared by Camille D. Walls, City Planner, and Darryl Ford, Assistant Planner, Planning and Development.